

Is Leclerc wrong about Ferrari?

*Why he **should** look elsewhere*



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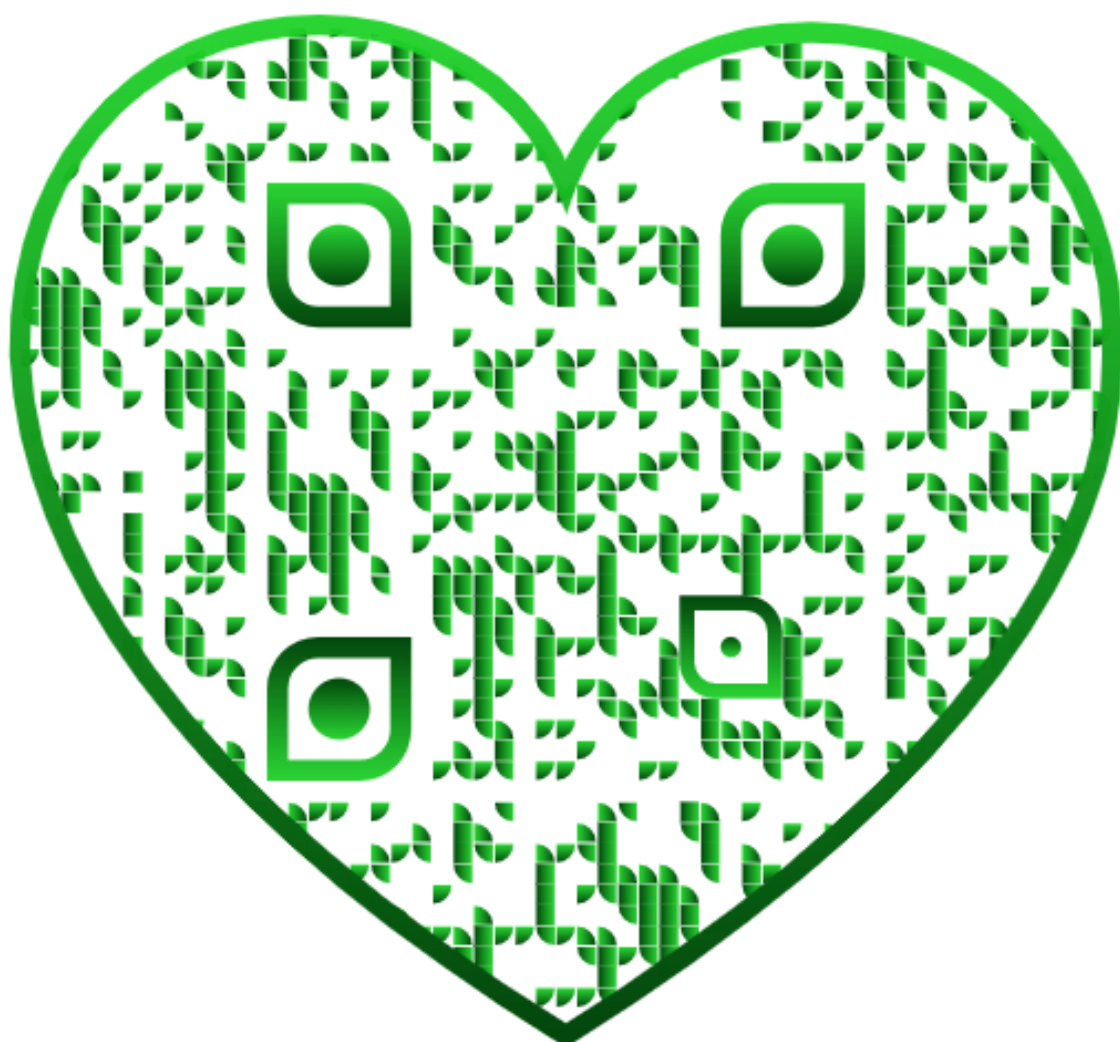
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16 OCTOBER-
12 NOVEMBER 2025

COVER IMAGE:
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The SF-25 has not enabled Leclerc to take on McLaren. Can Ferrari give him what he needs to be champion?

How long can Leclerc wait for a title tilt?

You could make a case arguing that Charles Leclerc is the *fastest* driver in Formula 1. Max Verstappen fans will now doubtless be reaching for their pens/keyboards/smart phones so, to save us all some time and effort, let's just say that Leclerc is one of two drivers on the current grid who could perhaps beat the Dutchman in the same car, at least over one lap.

Leclerc seems to be committed to staying at Ferrari, but should he? Stuart Codling takes a look at the Monegasque's situation at the famous Italian team on page 22. We're not saying he must leave, but he should at least consider other options because he is far too good to have only eight grand prix wins and to not have yet truly fought for the championship. Some might point to 2022, which Ferrari started strongly and

when Leclerc made errors, notably at the French GP. But, as the season went on, it became apparent that a) the F1-75 was tricky to drive; and b) Red Bull increasingly had the edge. Ferrari couldn't sustain its attack across the whole season.

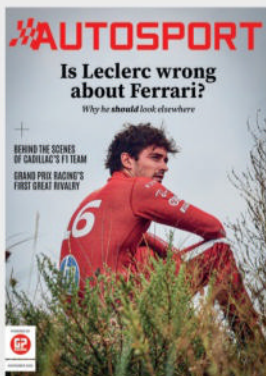
Deciding when to stop developing a current car and when to focus on next year's machine is a challenge for all teams, no more so than with the new ruleset arriving in 2026. The new regulations have led many to believe that development this season has stopped, but that's not the case. There are still gains to be made – as Jake Boxall-Legge explains on p34.

Cadillac doesn't have that particular concern – it has much bigger challenges ahead of arriving on the F1 grid for the 2026 Australian GP in March. Fil Cleeren delves behind the scenes of F1's first new team in a decade and finds out how it is finding inspiration in NASA's lunar programme (p44).

Outside of F1, Zak O'Sullivan has already made some tricky decisions, but his move to Japan is paying dividends, as he tells Jamie Klein (p78), while Gary Watkins looks at how likely it is that sportscar racing can make its next big step: amalgamating LMH and LMDh to become one, international ruleset (p96).

It's been a busy time on the UK scene over the past month, with many champions crowned. After a superb season, Tom Ingram claimed his second British Touring Car title and he talks to Marcus Simmons on p136. There's also plenty of news and a special report on the Goodwood Revival (p140).

Congratulations to all the champions, as well as to McLaren for clinching its 10th F1 constructors' crown. We'll be marking that particular milestone with a McLaren special as part of our next issue, out on 13 November.



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Monza's party atmosphere

The celebratory spirit of the legion of tifosi packing Monza's pitstraight may not have reached quite the fever pitch that would have been fired up by a big result at home for their beloved Ferrari, but the sight from the podium greeting Italian Grand Prix winner Max Verstappen, plus Lando Norris (second) and Oscar Piastri (third), as they enjoyed a slug of Moet, was no less impressive. As Verstappen reflected: "It's super enjoyable to win here." Race debrief, page eight.

Photographer Mario Renzi/
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Max too busy celebrating to notice the gantry behind him

SUTTON/FORMULA 1/GETTY IMAGES

FORMULA 1

VERSTAPPEN WINS AS MCLAREN IS ENGULFED BY ‘SWAPGATE’

While Max Verstappen’s margin of victory at Monza – a hefty 19.2 seconds over Lando Norris – was perhaps inflated by McLaren’s willingness to go long and hang it out for a safety car, the manner of his win demonstrated his superiority.

It felt like this year’s race at Monza was picked straight from Formula 1’s 2023 highlights reel, where the weekly exhibitions of dominance from Verstappen only scarcely deviated off-script. That season, even when Verstappen looked like he might be under threat at the start of a race, the subsequent phases were always in thrall.

Indeed, at Monza, he faced a brief initial scare from Norris, who coerced Verstappen into cutting the chicane in his move at the start; the four-time champion was asked to give up the lead to Norris. There was no chance he’d comply so easily had he not been in control of a rocketship. His Red Bull RB21 was fast, and he

knew it. It took another two laps before the positions were reversed again; Verstappen soaked up the tow from Norris with DRS, and made the move into the Rettifilo.

This year, Verstappen has frequently been able to put the McLarens under scrutiny in qualifying, and occasionally upset the papaya cart with a pole-winning lap. He duly did so with his record-setting run at the Lombardy track, at 164.47mph beating Lewis Hamilton’s 2020 benchmark at the same venue. But it’s also true that Red Bull has not been quite on McLaren’s level with tyre management across a full grand prix.

At Monza, however, the track surface installed last year effectively mitigated the effects of degradation. Verstappen and Red Bull deserve full kudos for digesting the 2024 race. The team avoided the hubris of not developing a proper low-drag package for Monza, then explored

what was possible with the low degradation experienced last year. The RB21 was fully trimmed out. Red Bull’s engineers were nervous about that solution and wanted to stick downforce back on after FP3, but Verstappen was adamant that he’d like to keep running with the bare minimum of wing level. It turned out to be the decisive call.

With Verstappen’s pace so strong, it was almost inconsequential that Norris led through laps two and three. Verstappen had come across to the right-hand side of the track to cover off Norris, who kept his foot in it despite being shown the grass at the pitlane exit. Regardless, Norris had the inside line, while Verstappen bundled across the kerb run-off and preserved the lead. He was told to hand the reins to Norris at the start of the next lap.

“He’s put me in the grass and cut the corner,” Norris reported, although revised his opinion on their battle – and the short-lived subsequent one on lap four – after the race. “It was a little bumpy at one point but it was what I expected – close and fun racing. Tough again, as expected, but enjoyable. It was, in a way, nice to go out on top for a couple of laps, but it didn’t last very long and Max’s pace was just far too good for us today, especially in that first stint.”

Although Norris had the lead, there was little opportunity to build the requisite 1s gap needed to evade Verstappen’s DRS-assisted threat. At the end of the third lap, Verstappen was within 0.6s of Norris. He scarcely needed to change course; Norris went for the inside, and



Kerfuffle at the start forces Verstappen to take to the run-off

ILLMAN/GETTY IMAGES



HONEY/LAT/GETTY IMAGES

so Verstappen swung his car around the outside and forced Norris into dropping the position.

Battle won, Verstappen moved onto phase two: cover off the whiff of a DRS threat, before building a more significant break in front of the pack. The first tick was etched onto the checklist by the end of that lap.

From laps five to 26, Verstappen continued to extend the gap by a quarter of a second per lap, and the steady gains represented the continued inevitability of Verstappen's second Italian triumph of the year. Even if Norris got close to (or even surpassed) his laps, the Dutchman simply turned up the wick to render those efforts futile.

McLaren had few remaining options to beat Verstappen. Outlasting the Red Bull on the tyres wasn't going to work. While it was true that Verstappen was losing time to Norris at the end of his stint on mediums, the drop-off was incredibly small; from laps 27 to 36, Norris gained less than a tenth per lap.

So McLaren elected to hang it out long and place its victory hopes in the hands of a potential safety car. Verstappen pitted on lap 37 and closed out the race on hard tyres while the McLaren duo carried on, knowing that following Verstappen onto the same tyre at the same time would offer no net benefit.

McLaren reasoned that if a safety car arrived after the Red Bull crew had serviced Verstappen, the brace of MCL39s could attempt to capitalise with the soft-to-hard tyre delta. If Verstappen had about 0.3s per lap on Norris, the predicted 0.5s soft-hard pace difference offered a route back onto the top step of the podium.

Norris and Oscar Piastrì – who had survived an early tussle with Charles Leclerc to reclaim a net third place – might have been in the lead,

but Verstappen had already eaten beyond McLaren's 'cheap safety car stop' window with his precipitous pace on hard rubber. McLaren was hurtling towards the end of the safety car window outright before it had to concede defeat on the mediums.

Then came subsequent complications when the McLarens emerged from the pitstops in the 'wrong' order. McLaren's decision to pit Piastrì first, Norris's slow stop, and the swap in positions afterwards to compensate, arguably detracted from the brilliance of Verstappen. Did McLaren need to put itself in that position? When you have the luxury of two drivers who are, at their core, team players, you can get away with taking such liberties. There's no way that Verstappen would have acquiesced to a call like that in the same way as Piastrì – but equally, there's no way that Verstappen would ever find himself in the same position.

Hysteria followed, speculating upon the reaction if Piastrì loses the championship by the swing in points enacted by the Monza swap. But surely there'd be a more pertinent question to ask, given the championship lead post-Monza spanned 31 points: how do you lose that margin?

Either way, the distraction arguably suited Verstappen just fine. He doesn't live for adulation; his raison d'être is to race, and to win. He did thus and let the McLaren drivers field the bulk of the questions in the press conference, while luxuriating in his victory.

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE



For ratings of all the drivers go to [autosport.com/f1/driver-ratings](https://www.autosport.com/f1/driver-ratings)



RESULTS ROUND 16/24

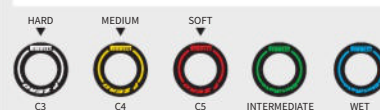
MONZA
7.09.25 / 53 LAPS



POS	DRIVER	TIME	GRID
1	Max Verstappen Red Bull-Honda RBPT RB21	1h13m24.325s	1
2	Lando Norris McLaren-Mercedes MCL39	+19.207s	2
3	Oscar Piastrì McLaren-Mercedes MCL39	+21.351s	3
4	Charles Leclerc Ferrari SF-25	+25.624s	4
5	George Russell Mercedes F1 W16	+32.881s	5
6	Lewis Hamilton Ferrari SF-25	+37.449s	10
7	Alexander Albon Williams-Mercedes FW47	+50.537s	14
8	Gabriel Bortoleto Sauber-Ferrari C45	+58.484s	7
9	Andrea Kimi Antonelli Mercedes F1 W16	+59.762s	6
10	Isack Hadjar Racing Bulls-Honda RBPT VCARB 02	+1m03.891s	19
11	Carlos Sainz Williams-Mercedes FW47	+1m04.469s	13
12	Ollie Bearman Haas-Ferrari VF-25	+1m19.288s	11
13	Yuki Tsunoda Red Bull-Honda RBPT RB21	+1m20.701s	9
14	Liam Lawson Racing Bulls-Honda RBPT VCARB 02	+1m22.351s	18
15	Esteban Ocon Haas-Ferrari VF-25	-1 lap/+2.135s	15
16	Pierre Gasly Alpine-Renault A525	-1 lap/+5.837s	20
17	Franco Colapinto Alpine-Renault A525	-1 lap/+7.448s	17
18	Lance Stroll Aston Martin-Mercedes AMR25	-1 lap/+9.301s	16
R	Fernando Alonso 24 laps/suspension Aston Martin-Mercedes AMR25		8
NS	Nico Hulkenberg hydraulics Sauber-Ferrari C45		12

FASTEST LAP Norris 1m20.901s (160.178mph)

TYRE COMPOUNDS USED



DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Piastrì 324; 2 Norris 293; 3 Verstappen 230; 4 Russell 194; 5 Leclerc 163; 6 Hamilton 117; 7 Albon 70; 8 Antonelli 66; 9 Hadjar 38; 10 Hulkenberg 37; 11 Stroll 32; 12 Alonso 30; 13 Ocon 28; 14 Gasly 20; 15 Lawson 20; 16 Bortoleto 18; 17 Bearman 16; 18 Sainz 16; 19 Tsunoda 12; 20 Colapinto 0; 21 Doohan 0.

CONSTRUCTORS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 McLaren 617; 2 Ferrari 280; 3 Mercedes 260; 4 Red Bull 239; 5 Williams 86; 6 Aston Martin 62; 7 Racing Bulls 61; 8 Sauber 55; 9 Haas 44; 10 Alpine 20.



Verstappen made hay on a track that suited the characteristics of his RB21

BAGNALL/SUTTON IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES

FORMULA 1

VERSTAPPEN GOES HIS OWN WAY TO SECOND CONSECUTIVE VICTORY

After a qualifying session that felt like it had lasted longer than every grand prix this season, the Azerbaijan Grand Prix would have to be something special indeed to keep the drama levels simmering. But apart from a burst of intrigue when Oscar Piastri fumbled the start and then smote the wall on the opening lap, the race in Baku panned out remarkably straightforwardly.

That suited Max Verstappen's purposes perfectly, for he had once again made something of a bet in set-up terms. Following the departure of Christian Horner, Red Bull Racing is a more pragmatic and engineering-led team under Laurent Mekies, one less dogmatic about following the outcomes of simulation if the seat of Verstappen's pants says otherwise. In Monza he had pushed hard for an ultra-low-downforce rear wing, but keeping the front relatively well-endowed. On a track with low downforce demands anyway, he figured that the increased 'feel' at corner entry would more than offset any disadvantage in the few (and short) fast corners there. Combined with a new floor believed to be worth 0.1 seconds a lap, but more benign across a range of ride heights, it gave Verstappen a platform to annex pole and then control the race.

And so it followed in Baku, where Verstappen also had to negotiate a qualifying session red-flagged a record-breaking six times, and which stretched to an hour and 58 minutes. Azerbaijan's capital is known for the strong wind blowing in off the Caspian Sea – something has

to keep that national flag the size of a football pitch fluttering – but the variability of the gusts on Saturday were of another order of magnitude. Add in sporadic rain and it was a challenge to keep the cars in a straight line, let alone precision-guide them through corners.

Ferrari and McLaren had cars quick enough to challenge for pole, but less benign in low-downforce trim. Given the conditions, their drivers simply failed to execute where Verstappen benefited from a front end that felt more planted, no matter which way (and how hard) the wind was blowing. Pirelli had brought compounds a step softer than last season, including the new C6 softest choice – but it has seen so little use this season that few teams have much confidence in it. Neither does it offer much in the way of performance uplift over the C5.

Pirelli's aim is to create a scenario where the

advantages of one-stop strategies over two-stoppers are less clear cut, but there were those who said this could have been better done by having a 'step' between the harder compounds. What the C6 brings is more questions in qualifying, especially in Baku, where the cold ambient temperatures made for difficult choices between the more familiar C5, which would take longer to bring into the optimum temperature window, and the less known C6, which is quicker to fire up but punishes slides with sharp performance drop-offs.

Verstappen therefore got the job done precisely all through qualifying while Lewis Hamilton was eliminated in Q2, and Charles Leclerc and Piastri found the barriers without setting times in Q3. Lando Norris blamed his seventh place on going out too early, but arguably the damage was done when he glanced



Piastri's McLaren met the barriers in Q3 and then on the opening lap of the race

CAREZZE/OLYMPUS/GETTY IMAGES

the wall and lost momentum on the sole push lap possible within the time remaining.

That gave Verstappen a sizeable time gap between his car on pole and the usual suspects behind. Nature abhors a vacuum, and this space was occupied by cars that might otherwise not have been there: Carlos Sainz's Williams, Liam Lawson's Racing Bulls, plus the two Mercedes and even Verstappen's own team-mate. Of the Mercs, Andrea Kimi Antonelli had scraped through Q1 on his final run, requiring a pep talk from team boss Toto Wolff to get his head together, but got it right when it counted and outqualified his sickly team-mate. Isack Hadjar might also have outqualified Norris but he too biffed the wall – and was so angry at his mistake that his knuckles were white as he gripped the railing in the media 'pen' afterwards.

The shape of the grid, combined with cold ambients and a quirk of ground-effect car convergence, then dictated the form of the race, helped by the unusual absence of safety cars around the pitstop window. Bernd Maylander made just one appearance, after Piastri bungled the start from ninth place: he pre-empted the starting lights, braked to a halt, then had to recover from anti-stall mode before stuffing his McLaren into the wall later around the lap. That was too early for anyone to pit apart from Alex Albon and Esteban Ocon, who had started from the tail of the field anyway; and the absence of further course neutralisations rendered this gamble pointless.

It was noted at Monza that the current generation of low-downforce rear wings is so efficient in their normal state that they enjoy little benefit when the DRS is activated, and Baku delivered further proof of this as the field clumped into stalemated processions. Verstappen had the benefit of clear air to manage the hard-compound tyres on which he started; behind him Sainz and Lawson, slower cars and running on mediums anyway, naturally fell back, enabling George Russell to run a long opening stint on hards and overcut them to second place – after Antonelli had been brought in nearer to the expected pitstop window to nudge Racing Bulls into pitting Lawson.

Norris and the Ferraris made very little headway. Hadjar got by Norris on the opening lap, and Leclerc pounced at the restart to demote the McLaren further. Hadjar then tapped the wall again and dropped two places but Norris struggled to pass the Ferrari, even though Leclerc was managing an energy recovery issue.

Whether Norris would or could have wrought a better result is tricky to unpack, since he lost 2s in his pitstop when the right-front wheelgun



Front-row starter Sainz followed up with maiden Williams podium

FOX/GETTY IMAGES

didn't engage. He emerged behind Lawson and Leclerc but, given the gap, he would likely have been alongside or marginally in front of Leclerc at best – on cold tyres. Tsunoda then pitted and emerged ahead of Leclerc – he had been 2s in front of Norris anyway before they both stopped – so even though Norris got past Leclerc, he remained stuck in seventh for the rest of the race.

Despite the Red Bull RB21's well-documented issues, it has been competitive at tracks with low downforce requirements, where its efficiency and ability to tolerate higher ride heights come to the fore. So it was always likely to perform well at the likes of Monza and Baku. Some in the commentariat have inferred from Verstappen's second consecutive victory that he has radically turned around his season and is back in the championship fight.

McLaren team principal Andrea Stella was certainly keen to steer them in that direction, saying not only "yes" that Verstappen is a threat, but "you should write that in capital letters". But he has another critical motive in play here: he needs to light a fire under his team to combat complacency after yet another weekend where imperfect execution has wrought a sub-optimal points haul.

While it's tempting to draw a trend line upwards based on two outcomes in a row, the high-downforce tracks to come would define whether or not the Verstappen/Red Bull revival is really on.

STUART CODLING



For ratings of all the drivers go to [autosport.com/f1/driver-ratings](https://www.autosport.com/f1/driver-ratings)



RESULTS ROUND 17/24

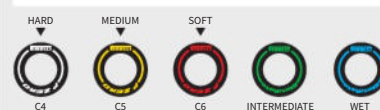
BAKU CITY CIRCUIT
21.09.25 / 51 LAPS



POS	DRIVER	TIME	GRID
1	Max Verstappen Red Bull-Honda RBPT RB21	1h33m26.408s	1
2	George Russell Mercedes F1 W16	+14.609s	5
3	Carlos Sainz Williams-Mercedes FW47	+19.199s	2
4	Andrea Kimi Antonelli Mercedes F1 W16	+21.760s	4
5	Liam Lawson Racing Bulls-Honda RBPT VCARB 02	+33.290s	3
6	Yuki Tsunoda Red Bull-Honda RBPT RB21	+33.808s	6
7	Lando Norris McLaren-Mercedes MCL39	+34.227s	7
8	Lewis Hamilton Ferrari SF-25	+36.310s	12
9	Charles Leclerc Ferrari SF-25	+36.774s	10
10	Isack Hadjar Racing Bulls-Honda RBPT VCARB 02	+38.982s	8
11	Gabriel Bortoletto Sauber-Ferrari C45	+1m07.606s	13
12	Ollie Bearman Haas-Ferrari VF-25	+1m08.262s	15
13	Alexander Albon Williams-Mercedes FW47	+1m12.870s	19
14	Esteban Ocon Haas-Ferrari VF-25	+1m17.580s	20
15	Fernando Alonso Aston Martin-Mercedes AMR25	+1m18.707s	11
16	Nico Hulkenberg Sauber-Ferrari C45	+1m20.237s	17
17	Lance Stroll Aston Martin-Mercedes AMR25	+1m36.392s	14
18	Pierre Gasly Alpine-Renault A525	-1 lap/+3.865s	18
19	Franco Colapinto Alpine-Renault A525	-1 lap/+6.325s	16
R	Oscar Piastri McLaren-Mercedes MCL39	0 laps/accident	9

FASTEST LAP Verstappen 1m43.388s (129.882mph)

TYRE COMPOUNDS USED



DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Piastri 324; 2 Norris 299; 3 Verstappen 255; 4 Russell 212; 5 Leclerc 165; 6 Hamilton 121; 7 Antonelli 78; 8 Albon 70; 9 Hadjar 39; 10 Hulkenberg 37; 11 Stroll 32; 12 Sainz 31; 13 Lawson 30; 14 Alonso 30; 15 Ocon 28; 16 Gasly 20; 17 Tsunoda 20; 18 Bortoletto 18; 19 Bearman 16; 20 Colapinto 0; 21 Doohan 0.

CONSTRUCTORS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 McLaren 623; 2 Mercedes 290; 3 Ferrari 286; 4 Red Bull 272; 5 Williams 101; 6 Racing Bulls 72; 7 Aston Martin 62; 8 Sauber 55; 9 Haas 44; 10 Alpine 20.



Russell banished any lingering Singapore hoodoo with victory from pole position

RAHMAN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

FORMULA 1

McLAREN WINS CONSTRUCTORS' TITLE AS RUSSELL AND VERSTAPPEN OUTSHINE ITS DRIVERS

If ever there were a day to prove that crowdsourcing opinions is a waste of time, it was the Sunday of the Singapore Grand Prix, where Fernando Alonso won Formula 1's increasingly fatuous 'Driver of the Day' poll for coming seventh, and the excellence of those who finished first and second was ignored in favour of a torrent of opinion regarding who prevailed in the battle for third place. In part this was because the race was a processional one-stop trudge, as is becoming a trend in the home of F1's original night race.

Time was when you could expect there to be many safety car periods at Marina Bay to disrupt the strategic cosiness: either on the opening lap due to Turn 1 chaos; or around the pitstop window as drivers push to take advantage of the powerful undercut effect; or towards the end as

physical and mental fatigue takes its toll on precision. But apart from the occasional brush with the wall this was an incident-free race for the most part, and there are those who feel that the deletion of the former Turns 16-19 has removed what used to be a hotbed of late-race incident.

Two key factors played into what was, for the mass media at least, the defining event of the race between McLaren's title protagonists Lando Norris and Oscar Piastri at Turn 3 on the opening lap: underwhelming qualifying performances by them, and rain ahead of the start that made the left-hand side of the grid less grippy than the right. George Russell delivered three great laps in the final phases of qualifying, building on a sizzling lap at the end of Q2, then going faster and then faster again in his two Q3 laps. Nobody could match the Mercedes – not

even a flying Max Verstappen, who qualified his Red Bull second, but then embarrassed himself by overshooting the current Turn 16 on his final flier and blaming Norris, on a cool-down lap two seconds in front, for dawdling and leaving 'dirty air'. It was a petulant outburst that amounted to 'How dare you be on the same track?'

The McLarens, particularly Norris, had been somewhat anonymous during practice and they ended qualifying with Piastri third and Norris fifth, with Russell's team-mate Andrea Kimi Antonelli between them. Unlike Russell, Antonelli had got slower during Q3 as his "emotions got higher" and he overdrove.

So that was the damage done and it put Norris in a position of needing to make an impact on the opening lap. He did, but probably not of the kind he had in mind. With the rest of the leading pack on medium tyres, Verstappen chose used softs in the hope of beating Russell to Turn 1, but the slipperiness of the left-hand side of the grid was his undoing – as it was for Antonelli. Verstappen had to follow Russell through Turns 1 and 2 while Norris disposed of Antonelli, launched up the inside of his team-mate into the first corner – and they only avoided an impact because there Piastri gave him room, compromising his own line into the next corner.

That gave Norris a run around the outside at Turn 2, which became the inside line for the left-hander that followed – but he was essentially stuffing his McLaren into a 'box' bounded by Verstappen in front, and his team-mate to the



Piastri (left) voiced his displeasure with his team-mate's physicality

SBLOHAM/LAT/GETTY IMAGES



Norris couldn't muster the pace to get past runner-up Verstappen

MASON/GETTY IMAGES

right. Norris made a glancing impact into the Red Bull, enough to dislodge the left-front wing endplate, and bounced into his team-mate, who had to give way again. Norris third, Piastri fourth, and that was how they would remain, despite Piastri lobbying for intervention from the pitwall.

"So are we cool with Lando just barging me out of the way?" he asked, the first of a torrent of entreaties that ended – more or less – when race engineer Tom Stallard informed him that the stewards saw no case to answer, and neither did the team, so "Control the controllables, mate".

Clearly this would be less of an issue but for McLaren's laudable but embattled policy of strict equality between its drivers, governed by that sacred textbook and its growing list of appendices, the 'papaya rules'. Were it not for this, and a history of interventions from above to right supposed wrongs, the incident would not have generated quite the level of anger it did.

And so to the drivers who did a palpably better job of the weekend. Russell smote the barrier in FP2, bringing out the red flags, but through qualifying and the race you would not think he was piloting a car that has traditionally struggled at hot venues requiring softer rubber. Having asserted himself over Verstappen at lights out, and left the world champion prioritising what was going on behind him rather than ahead, Russell swiftly broke out of DRS range.

Once Verstappen's soft-tyre gambit failed to net him track position, he had to keep Norris's McLaren at bay while managing his first set of boots until he could get far enough into the race to pit and emerge ahead of a gaggle of traffic led by Alonso in eighth place. The McLaren pitwall tried to hoodwink Red Bull into pulling the pin early, telling Norris "box to overtake Verstappen"

and deploying its mechanics to the pitlane, but it was a hollow ploy: at that point Verstappen had insufficient margin to pit and escape the traffic. He held out until the end of lap 19.

Russell stayed out six laps longer, avoided the undercut, and held his nerve as Verstappen trimmed his lead when they began to approach another cluster of traffic. But by now the Red Bull was struggling with graunchy gearshifts and a snappy brake-by-wire effect, and Russell came through the traffic with a greater margin. In the final phase Norris bore down on Verstappen but couldn't find the speed to make a pass – perhaps he'd used up all his assertiveness on the first lap.

Two years ago Russell fumbled this race in dramatic circumstances in the closing laps. Here he was imperious, crossing the line 5.430s to the good over Verstappen. Norris narrowed his team-mate's championship lead to 22 points, while Verstappen's net gain over Piastri was six points, leaving him 63 behind. Just as significantly, McLaren put the constructors' championship beyond reach.

"This track hasn't been my best friend over the years and that's often been through my own doing," Russell said. "But I'm a very different driver today to the one I was a couple of years ago. I feel more complete, more confident. I didn't feel any additional nerves or additional pressure. I knew I had a chance to win and I felt comfortable with that. I feel ready to fight for a championship, ready to take it to the next step."

STUART CODLING



For ratings of all the drivers go to autosport.com/f1/driver-ratings



RESULTS ROUND 18/24

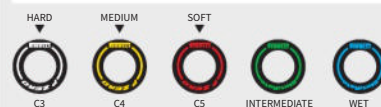
MARINA BAY
5.10.25 / 62 LAPS



POS	DRIVER	TIME	GRID
1	George Russell Mercedes F1 W16	1h40m22.367s	1
2	Max Verstappen Red Bull-Honda RBPT RB21	+5.430s	2
3	Lando Norris McLaren-Mercedes MCL39	+6.066s	5
4	Oscar Piastri McLaren-Mercedes MCL39	+8.146s	3
5	Andrea Kimi Antonelli Mercedes F1 W16	+33.681s	4
6	Charles Leclerc Ferrari SF-25	+45.996s	7
7	Fernando Alonso Aston Martin-Mercedes AMR25	+1m20.667s	10
8	Lewis Hamilton Ferrari SF-25	+1m25.251s	6
9	Ollie Bearman Haas-Ferrari VF-25	+1m33.527s	9
10	Carlos Sainz Williams-Mercedes FW47	-1 lap/+10.754s	18
11	Isack Hadjar Racing Bulls-Honda RBPT VCARB 02	-1 lap/+17.335s	8
12	Yuki Tsunoda Red Bull-Honda RBPT RB21	-1 lap/+19.269s	13
13	Lance Stroll Aston Martin-Mercedes AMR25	-1 lap/+24.490s	15
14	Alexander Albon Williams-Mercedes FW47	-1 lap/+25.320s	20
15	Liam Lawson Racing Bulls-Honda RBPT VCARB 02	-1 lap/+27.145s	12
16	Franco Colapinto Alpine-Renault A525	-1 lap/+42.890s	16
17	Gabriel Bortoleto Sauber-Ferrari C45	-1 lap/+46.753s	14
18	Esteban Ocon Haas-Ferrari VF-25	-1 lap/+47.133s	17
19	Pierre Gasly Alpine-Renault A525	-1 lap/+47.461s	19
20	Nico Hulkenberg Sauber-Ferrari C45	-1 lap/+49.040s	11

FASTEST LAP Hamilton 1m33.808s (117.488mph)

TYRE COMPOUNDS USED



DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Piastri 336; 2 Norris 314; 3 Verstappen 273; 4 Russell 237; 5 Leclerc 173; 6 Hamilton 125; 7 Antonelli 88; 8 Albon 70; 9 Hadjar 39; 10 Hulkenberg 37; 11 Alonso 36; 12 Sainz 32; 13 Stroll 32; 14 Lawson 30; 15 Ocon 28; 16 Gasly 20; 17 Tsunoda 20; 18 Bortoleto 18; 19 Bearman 18; 20 Colapinto 0; 21 Doohan 0.

CONSTRUCTORS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 McLaren 650; 2 Mercedes 325; 3 Ferrari 298; 4 Red Bull 290; 5 Williams 102; 6 Racing Bulls 72; 7 Aston Martin 68; 8 Sauber 55; 9 Haas 46; 10 Alpine 20.



Grosjean (inset)
lapped Mugello
in 2023 car

BOTH: HAAS F1 TEAM/DE BORTOLI/LAT/GETTY IMAGES

FORMULA 1

GROSJEAN BACK IN AN F1 HAAS FIVE YEARS AFTER FIRE

Romain Grosjean returned to the cockpit of a Formula 1 car for the first time since his horrific fireball accident at the 2020 Bahrain Grand Prix when he drove a 2023 Haas VF-23 during a test event at Mugello.

Grosjean had been primed to drive a Mercedes around his return to racing in 2021, but was never able to schedule it around his IndyCar obligations.

Haas team principal Ayao Komatsu assumed his former role as Grosjean's engineer at the test, which featured other former track team members now embedded in Haas's heritage department reprising their old

roles. "The whole thing was a highlight," Komatsu said of the test, which took place in damp conditions. "We wanted to do it in a proper high-speed circuit; Mugello is one of my favourites, and his favourites. Romain was just smiling all day."

Grosjean called it a "a special day – a rainy day but a happy day. I felt a bit rusty at first, but everything came back! My last standing start was Bahrain 2020, so this went way better. It was fantastic and I'm very very grateful. It made me cry!"

Former IndyCar driver James Hinchcliffe also tested a Haas over the day at Mugello.



OBITUARY

ENZO OSELLA 1939-2025

Ex-Formula 1 team owner and constructor Enzo Osella has died at the age of 86.

Born near Turin, Osella's route into motorsport emerged through working at his father's garage, when he was offered the chance to co-drive a rally for a customer. Osella then began to drive himself in rallies and hillclimb events, superseded by a career as test driver for Abarth.

He took over Abarth's racing division when the marque was bought by Fiat, his cars finding success in hillclimbs and endurance events. The initial expansion to single-seaters was not entirely auspicious, but a break-out 1979 F2 campaign with Eddie Cheever led to his eponymous team's move into F1 in 1980, running a

single car for Cheever.

Osella scored five points across its 11 years in F1, three of them with Jean-Pierre Jarier's fourth place amid a sparse grid at the 1982 San Marino GP. Team stalwart Piercarlo Ghinzani scored the other two with fifth in the 1984 Dallas GP – Jo Gartner's fifth place in that year's Italian GP was not eligible for points. Nicola Larini was close to adding to the tally in the 1989 Canadian GP, before retiring with electrical problems.

Osella then sold his F1 team to Gabriele Rumi's Fondmetal company and returned to his roots of developing specialist cars for hillclimbs.

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE



Ghinzani was fifth
in Dallas for team
of Osella (inset)

LAT/GETTY IMAGES; PHIPPS/SUTTON IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES



JAN BRUCKE/VLN

VERSTAPPEN AT THE 'RING

Four-time F1 world champion Max Verstappen made a splash on his GT3 debut in September: he won an NLS round on the Nürburgring Nordschleife! Verstappen extended a lead of a minute in the first two hours before handing his Emil Frey Racing Ferrari 296 GT3 to protege Chris Lulham. The Brit brought it home 24.5 seconds clear of a Ford Mustang GT3 driven by Jann Mardenborough, Fabio Scherer and Dennis Fetzner.

Verstappen beat Hamilton
to win 2021 sprint at
British Grand Prix...



BARON/GETTY IMAGES

FORMULA 1

SPRINT RACE FOR BRITISH GP IN 2026

Silverstone will host a Formula 1 sprint race for the first time since 2021 as the championship refreshes its roster of shorter races for 2026. The Northamptonshire venue held F1's inaugural sprint back in 2021, which was won by Max Verstappen, back when these races decided the grid for the Sunday grand prix.

While F1's sprints have been a divisive addition to the weekend format, the series

revealed that the 2024 sprint weekends resulted in an average TV viewership increase of 10%, prompting talks to further increase their number.

Discussions are ongoing to raise the number from six to around 10 sprints from 2027 onwards. Talks between commercial rightsholder FOM, governing body the FIA and the 11 teams will also include ideas to further refine the format, with F1 CEO and president Stefano Domenicali floating the idea of at least considering reversed grids.

"The F1 sprint has continued to grow in positive impact and popularity since it was introduced in 2021,"

said Domenicali. "With four competitive sessions rather than two during a conventional grand prix weekend, F1 sprint events offer more action each day for our fans, broadcast partners, and for the promoters, driving increased attendance and viewership.

"The 2026 season will usher in a new era of regulations, so having three new sprint venues will only add to the drama on track."

Zandvoort will hold its first sprint race in its final grand prix weekend, after the organisers of the Dutch GP elected not to renew its contract beyond 2026. There are two further new additions to the sprint race calendar for next season; the Canadian GP will host one of the shorter Saturday races for the first time and, curiously, the Singapore GP has been added to the mix.

Both China and Miami have retained their sprint race slots, while the four other additions take over the sprint slots vacated by the Belgian, Austin, Brazilian and Qatar races.

**STUART CODLING
& FILIP CLEEREN**

...while Zandvoort
gets a slot for its
2026 F1 farewell



OLIPHANT/GETTY IMAGES



SLOVENCIK/APA/GETTY IMAGES

HORNER GETS ON THE BLOWER

Former Red Bull boss Christian Horner has been "ringing up pretty much every team owner", according to Aston Martin CEO Andy Cowell, as he looks for a new role in F1. Haas team principal Ayao Komatsu confirmed talks had taken place, but had since ended, while Aston – another rumoured destination – has "no plans" to add Horner to the team.

HADJAR IN FRAME TO REPLACE TSUNODA

Red Bull is understood to be lining up Racing Bulls star rookie Isack Hadjar to replace Yuki Tsunoda for 2026 as the Japanese continues to struggle at the senior team. With F2 ace Arvid Lindblad under consideration for a Racing Bulls seat, it calls into question the future of Tsunoda and Liam Lawson for next season; at least one of them is at risk of losing their drive.

GASLY COMMITS TO ALPINE UNTIL 2028

Pierre Gasly has reinforced his commitment to Alpine and has signed a new contract with the team, which will run until the end of 2028. The Frenchman has scored two podium finishes since joining in 2023. The Enstone team's new managing director Steve Nielsen says the team is "a few races away" from deciding on Gasly's team-mate for 2026.



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INSIDER

McLaren's Singapore fight is what we needed, says Jake Boxall-Legge

Personally, I couldn't care less what people thought of Lando Norris's 'robust' move on Oscar Piastri at the start of the Singapore Grand Prix. Inevitably, there was a flurry of social media comments from both fanbases, taking extreme stances in favour of 'their' driver and against 'the other one', but invariably these are rarely balanced by consistency in those views. The grumbling surpassed the magnitude of what actually happened on track.

What I will say is this: that bit of on-track needle was *necessary*. If you're a neutral, there's a likelihood that the good-natured jostling within the Norris-Piastri relationship was starting to trend towards the saccharine, which at times was also necessary for McLaren's own agenda. The team's priority was to secure the constructors' championship first, and both drivers were expected to contribute towards that. Mission accomplished, then; now it can turn its attentions to the next battleground over the final six races: the drivers' title.

Even if the constructors' championship was assured, McLaren needed to ensure it was fully locked down in the opening 18 races. A team goes beyond the two drivers on the track; the 1000-strong workforce involved in getting two competitive cars to every grand prix needed to be assured of their reward first. The constructors' championship isn't of primary interest to viewers, but it's the priority for any team; that's where the money is, and that's likely where the employees' bonuses come from.

What we as fans (as much as we sometimes moan about F1, we're here because we love it) want now is a thrilling title showdown. I would still appreciate both drivers shaking each other's hand at the end of it in a courteous fashion, and I don't think that's mutually exclusive with the idea of the two of them knocking 10 bells out of each other on track (*agreed, though there are limits! – ed.*)

Perhaps people were taken aback by the paradigm

shift. Norris has copped a lot of flak for being too soft on-track, and too willing to acquiesce to another driver's robustness. Piastri, meanwhile, has earned plaudits for being an unflappable presence who is uncompromising behind the wheel. But the *Freaky Friday*-style role reversal added an interesting element to the opening act in Singapore, as Norris decided to take what he thought he was due and Piastri had a bit of an uncharacteristic sulk about it. The Australian changed his tune when the fury had died down, and reckoned that it wouldn't necessarily change how he goes racing with Norris in the future.

But it will – and it should. McLaren's racing mantra has always been for a driver to avoid hitting their team-mate and, contextualised by the Canadian GP shunt, the concern is that it knocks one – or both – of the drivers out of the race. But when there's no space at a tight corner, there's nothing wrong with a bit of hip and shoulder.

As much as we'd like to decry those who believe that a) the drivers of their age were the zenith of F1 stardom, and that b) the current drivers are too quick to complain about minor incidents, it's hard to escape the feeling that there are those who are too eager to appeal to the referee. It's part of gaining an advantage, I suppose, especially when there's no guarantee that a maligned driver can get the position back, but I generally dislike the attempts to goad the race directors into awarding a penalty for hard racing.

Piastri now knows the limit. For the rest of 2025, he has two options. One: operate at that limit, and give his team-mate as good as he gets. He can lean on Norris a bit more in similar situations. In Jeddah, Piastri played the game perfectly with Max Verstappen at the start and ran him out of road at Turn 1, knowing the Dutchman was going to try a little mid-corner pump of the accelerator to draw level. He did the same with Norris before at Monza last year; the move was contact free, but Piastri assumed

"When there's no space at a tight corner, there's nothing wrong with a bit of hip and shoulder"

the outside line through the Variante della Roggia and dared his team-mate to even try to keep his foot in it.

Earlier this season, this writer didn't mind McLaren's kid-gloves approach to managing its drivers; the deference to the constructors' championship was understandable. At this point, though, I'd just like to see a few fireworks and an exciting showdown – ideally in Abu Dhabi – between the two drivers. That's not a call for them to fight dirty, by any stretch of the imagination, but it would be considerably more fun to watch them actually challenge each other.

Piastri's other option? Spend time with his engineers, perfect that set-up, and leave Norris for dust. That way, the whole 'papaya rules' debate is rendered moot – and Piastri comes away with a title and his superiority assured. 🍌



INSIDER

F1 drivers should just shut up about 2026, says Oleg Karpov

“F1 has chosen that direction for all the right reasons – and I have no doubt that as a sport we can make sure the racing is great,” said no Formula 1 driver about the 2026 regulation changes. And that’s probably OK – you want them to speak their minds. What you don’t want is a driver sounding like a cardboard cutout from an insurance commercial, bragging about having nothing to worry about while standing in front of a car wreck. Yet sometimes they do.

F1 teams’ PR and marketing departments are now almost as big as the mechanics’ crews. And, while it would be an overstatement to say that their drivers are overcontrolled, it’s still unusual for a regular F1 pilot (one whose surname doesn’t start with ‘Alo-’ or end with ‘-tappen’) to bash their own team’s lack of performance or a strategy call. When a person in the same-coloured shirt is standing next to you with a recording device, that’s a factor you consider when choosing your words.

Some scenes from early *Drive to Survive* seasons captured a few ‘media briefings’ that teams offer. As contrived as the series can be, you still have to credit the Netflix crews for showing Sebastian Vettel – a four-time world champion and Ferrari driver – being told by the team’s PR that he “can’t be too funny” when the team isn’t winning.

There’s a long, interesting debate about how a sport that should thrive on drama and personality gets neutered by the very tool that claims to promote it. You could argue that instead of curfew rules and headcount limits for those working on cars, we should have much stricter limits on marketing and PR staff at the track.

Even in that environment, some topics are almost off-limits. On stewards’ decisions, drivers seem far

more creative – there usually aren’t FIA white shirts hovering with voice recorders. You can also be outspoken when telling Pirelli, via the media, how to make better tyres – picking whatever narrative suits you, jumping between “too soft” and “too hard”.

Then there’s the sport itself and its future – always fertile ground. And while it’s often uncomfortable to criticise your own team or team-mate, it’s somehow fine to talk down the whole industry.

Remember the outcry from the drivers when the halo arrived – a device literally designed to protect their very own heads. It turned out fine, didn’t it? What first looked ugly and out of place now feels integral to a single-seater – to the extent that pre-halo photos look weird. Alex Wurz can tell you stories of drivers later apologising for being cocky in the media and admitting how uncomfortable it feels to sit now in a fully open cockpit on a demo run at Goodwood, for example.

And oh, there were also complaints about the noise, of course. You still hear them whenever V10 nostalgia trends and someone wants cheap popularity points. Today’s drivers rave about the 2010 cars, too. Guess what the 2010 crowd said back then? Right – that the 1990s were better.

It’s nowhere near as bad now with the 2026 rules, but you still hear moaning about how unsatisfying the next-gen cars are in simulators, or how “unnatural” the racing might look – even though those models are still early builds. Some even say that “smart” drivers will benefit – a line that almost implies F1 should protect drivers’ right to remain stupid.

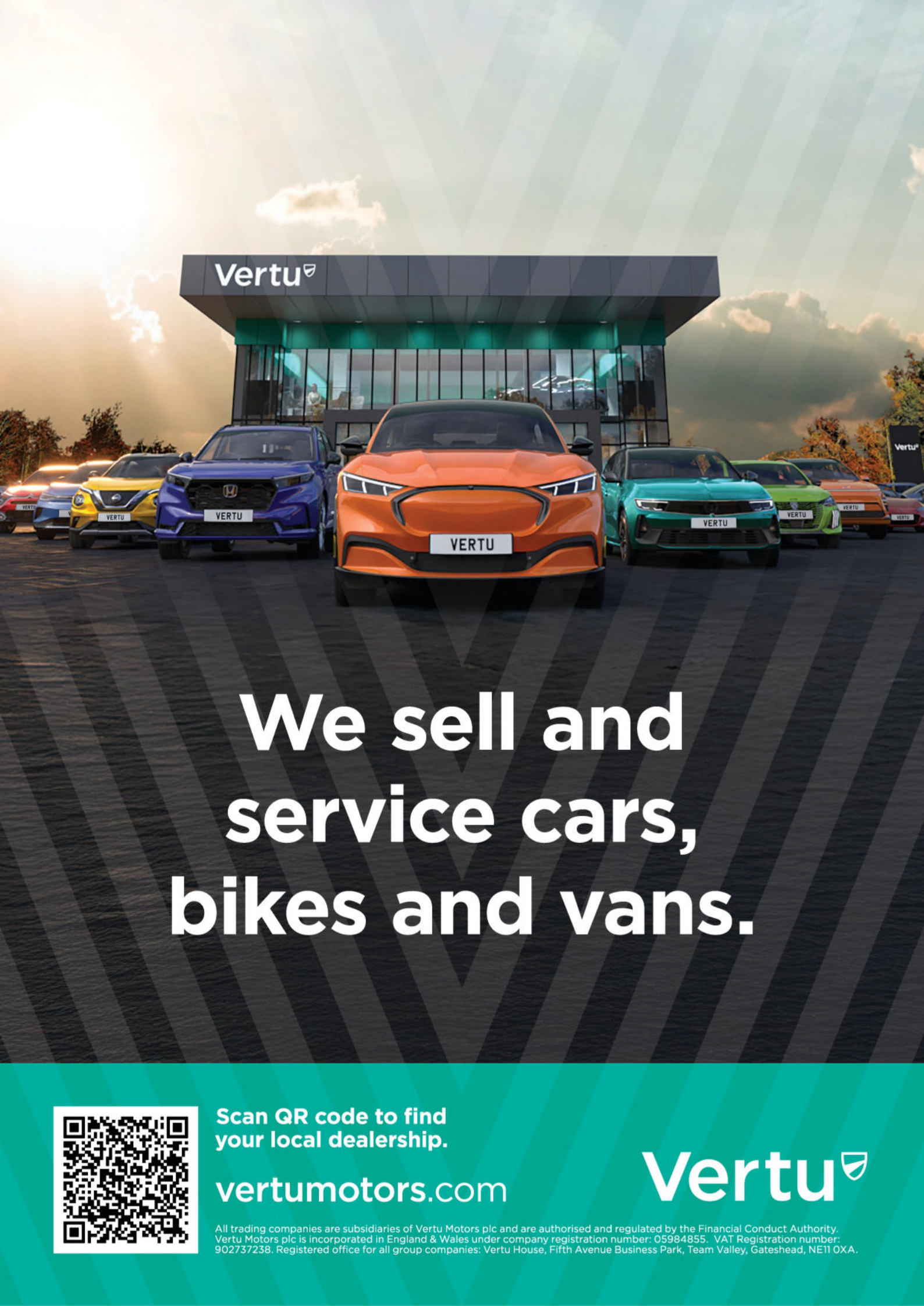
And while, of course, you want your F1 driver to feel free to be themselves, it’s probably wise for them to try harder to find the right balance in how they come across in the media. They aren’t, at the end of the day, the only

“It will most likely be just about fine – and then, inevitably, get better. As many times before”

ones responsible for the negativity around the sport’s near future. After all, even if a driver were to say that F1 will surely be fine next year, that quote would never make a clickable headline – because, for some reason, humanity loves negativity. But bringing the sport down as a whole isn’t going to help. Showing a bit more of their own character will.

Truth is, no one knows what 2026 will bring or how the racing will look. And, outrageous as it may sound in contrast to what drivers say, it will most likely be just about fine – and then, inevitably, get better. As in 2014. As many times before.

Formula 1 will be different next year. But as long as the best driver in the best car wins, it’s still going to be Formula 1. 🏁



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INSIDER

Pat Symonds explains the key timelines in building an F1 car

Our question this month refers not to technology but to process. I have been asked: “At what point does a team stop design work and actually build the car?” The question as posed presupposes that there is a singular date at which a car is defined, whereas in reality a Formula 1 car is never fully defined but is in fact a prototype that develops for every race.

However, the process of creating the car will vary from team to team and will depend on the circumstances that the team finds itself in. It’s also a fact that the advent of the cost cap in the F1 regulations has had a profound effect on how teams go about transitioning from year to year.

Let’s first deal with the circumstances that a team might find itself in. The prize money that is awarded in F1 is purely based on constructors’ championship positions, plus there are additional bonuses paid to teams that have historical success, which is additional to the merit payments all receive. The total prize fund is a proportion of the profit made by Formula One Management and once the bonus payments have been made the rest is split in such a way that, on average, a single place further up the championship table is worth £6-7million.

This means that a team that’s in a tight fight for position each year might wish to devote resource to upgrades of its current car at the expense of concentrating on the car for next season. This year McLaren tied up the constructors’ championship in Singapore, whereas Ferrari and Red Bull are separated by just eight points. The consequence of this on the design, manufacture and build programme for 2026 is that McLaren can afford to ease up on 2025 upgrades and put all its resource into next year’s car. If Mercedes in second place did this, it might be in danger of slipping two places in the championship by the end of the year with a consequential loss of approaching £14m. The two teams’ approach therefore is going to be different.

Cadillac, as a brand-new team, must prove not just a new design but a whole new squad, including procedures, support equipment and supply chain. It can’t afford to leave things to the last minute as the consequences can mean missing valuable track testing time.

So, the answer as to when a team starts design is variable, but it is a basic truism that the earlier you start researching the new car, and the later you commit to production, the more performance that car is going to have. However, there are certain timing milestones that need to be met and in F1, unlike many other projects, the end point will not move. The date of the first race and the preceding tests are set in stone, and therefore you need to consider some of the major sub-projects that lie on the critical path to completion of the car.

The first of these is the monocoque itself and this is an item that, pre-budget cap, was generally redesigned each year. Even now it is more likely than not that changes will need to be made, even if it’s not a clean-sheet-of-paper redesign. To meet the deadlines, it is normal to have to define and fix the outside surfaces of the monocoque around August, which means that the design work will have started considerably earlier. How early will depend on the magnitude of the changes and consequently how much new tooling needs to be designed and made.

This does not mean that the design of the monocoque will be completed by August – far from it. Detail design and determination of the layup of the carbon fibre plies will continue well into the last quarter of the year. The other long lead item is the gearbox, but as the gearbox cassette – the housing that contains all the gears and shift mechanism – is rarely changed, it is just the carbon fibre housing that might be updated.

Of course, while all this is happening, development of the current car continues. This does not just occupy

“The cost cap has had a profound effect on how teams go about transitioning from year to year”

the design team but more importantly the aero development group. At some point earlier in the year the chief technical officer will outline the proposed amount of time the current car will spend in the tunnel and how much will be devoted to next season’s challenger. This plan will be built around the surplus within the budget cap once all the committed spend has been accounted for. As we’ve seen, this allows significant upgrades to be brought to the cars during the season, but this will ideally be front loaded in the year to both extract maximum benefit and to allow a timely transition from current car development to future car design. ✎

**Want to ask Pat a tech question for a future issue?
Let us know on autosport@autosport.com**

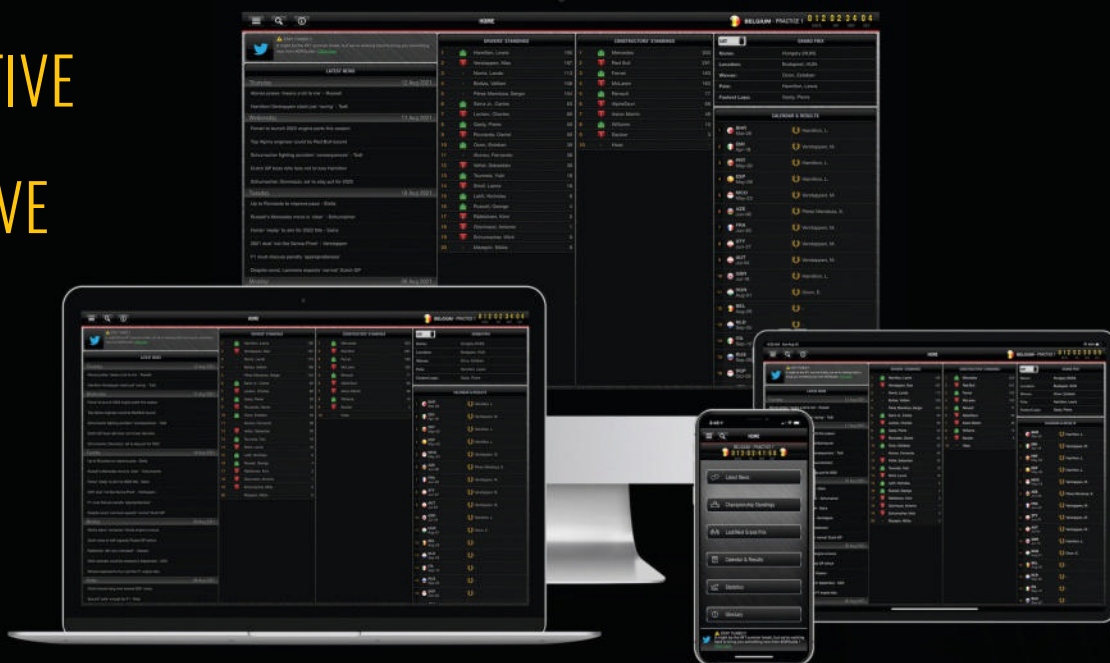


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Charles Leclerc

LECLERC TIME TO LOOK ELSEWHERE?

For seven years Charles Leclerc has been claiming sporadic race wins for Ferrari, but the team has yet to supply him with a car that can win the world championship. So for all his loyalties, how long will one of the fastest drivers on the grid want to stick around before his competitive urge forces him to move?

STUART CODLING

PHOTOGRAPHY GETTY IMAGES





A

s this edition of Autosport hits the shelves, Charles Leclerc will be celebrating his 28th birthday. When he was born on 16 October 1997, Elton John was enjoying his fifth and final week atop the UK singles chart with the AA-side *Something About The Way You Look/Candle In The Wind '97*, imminently to be deposed by the Spice Girls with *Spice Up Your Life*.

This is a roundabout, perhaps even overly abstruse, way of expressing an unfortunate fact: Leclerc is no longer the keen young rookie who rocketed onto the Formula 1 scene in 2018 with Alfa Romeo, effectively ending Kimi Raikkonen's Ferrari career by earning promotion to Maranello for the following year, where he did the same favour for Sebastian Vettel, a four-time world champion. He is two years away from turning 30 and the inevitable point where one is considered an elder statesman of F1, or at least a seasoned veteran.

He has won eight grands prix for Ferrari, an average rate of slightly more than one a year. Leclerc's talent deserves more than this. Much as the team and its loyal tifosi love Charles, and the feeling is clearly mutual, the fact remains that he is investing his years of peak performance in a team that has failed to give him a car worthy of winning world championships. His recent pronouncements have remained outwardly faithful to the project, while cut through with a note of – disillusionment? Or just fraying patience?

"I've always loved Ferrari," he said during the Azerbaijan weekend, "and that's where I draw my motivation from – because I want to bring back Ferrari to the top no matter how long it takes. And I'll do absolutely everything until I stop believing in the project. But at the moment I'm fully into it, I'm fully working on it and that's what motivates me.

"Of course that doesn't erase the disappointment that I've had at the beginning of the season when I saw we were quite a few steps behind McLaren, but then you reset and you find your motivation in other goals, in other targets, which is now to hopefully get a win this year.

"It's underwhelming compared with where we wanted to be, but it's the situation we're in. And as a driver I've got to make the best out of this situation, not only for the team but also for myself – and I'm very competitive as well so the fact that we've got two cars is also something that pushes me to keep being at the top of my game and to keep improving. So on that I really don't lack any motivation – I mean I'm super-motivated but, as I said, of course the disappointment was there at the beginning of the season."

The rumour mill

In 2023 there were rumours that Leclerc was in talks with Mercedes, prompting angry denials from all parties concerned, including Ferrari team principal Fred Vasseur. Whether or not there was any contact – and it could easily have been a case of silly season media speculation, or a negotiating tactic as Mercedes boss Toto Wolff wrangled with Lewis Hamilton – nothing came of it. But the Italian media has ever been a thorn in the side of Ferrari drivers and bosses; this summer *La Gazzetta dello Sport* and *Corriere della Sera* began to take aim at Vasseur himself, alongside new technical director Loic Serra.

On top of that, Leclerc became the object of rumours once more as Mercedes delayed re-signing both George Russell and Andrea Kimi Antonelli. In a season largely dominated by McLaren on track, with the ongoing soap opera at Red Bull lingering in the background, there was a lull in the day-to-day narrative that some online outlets chose to fill with speculation that Leclerc might go to Mercedes. These drums beat louder once it became clear that Verstappen was going to remain at Red Bull.

"When I signed at Ferrari I knew about this," said Vasseur during an appearance on the official F1 podcast. "I knew I would be exposed to the gossips, to the rumours, to this kind of polemic. But in the same article we had two other topics.

"The first one was, 'Ah perhaps Loic [Serra] is not the right guy for the job'. Loic arrived after the car [design for 2025 was finalised] and I was a bit upset that you can throw a name like this under the bus just to create the polemic »



The Monegasque scored his maiden grand prix victory at Spa in 2019

M. SUTTON/HILLMAN



Ferrari irked by repeated press claims that Leclerc will up sticks to Mercedes

“It’s underwhelming compared with where we wanted to be, but it’s the situation we’re in”

Battling Verstappen
for the lead at the start
of the 2022 Japanese GP



ETHERINGTON/LAT



Leclerc joined Vettel at Ferrari in 2019; the German was out by the end of 2020



Tricky-to-handle SF-23 put Leclerc in the barriers during 2023 Miami qualifying

“They said Charles will go to Mercedes. It was the same article the last five, six races”



Leclerc best of the rest behind the McLarens in July's Belgian GP

BAGNALL/SUTTON IMAGES

with absolute nonsense. The second point was about Charles.

“They said Charles will go to Mercedes. It was the same article the last five, six races and Charles each Thursday is coming back to say, ‘Guys, it’s not true. I’m at Ferrari. I want to stay.’ At one stage I think this article is more to create a mess than something else.

“And it’s where I say, ‘Guys, please calm down’. I’m not asking the press to be positive with Ferrari when we’re not doing well. You can have a negative judgement but just to – I don’t want to say the word [bulls***] because I don’t want to have to go to the stewards – but to spread this on the team each weekend, please calm down. Be negative when we are doing a poor job on track but don’t spread rumours like this.”

Should he stay or should he go?

Leclerc has been part of the Ferrari picture for so long, and is so beloved by the team and its fans, that it’s difficult to see him willingly walk away. His spectacular, committed style has earned comparisons with Ferrari legend Gilles Villeneuve and rightly so. Besides his sheer bravura and exuberance at the wheel, Leclerc shares with Villeneuve an honesty and sense of honour. He can be brutally excoriating about his own mistakes and chafes openly if he thinks a team-mate has been duplicitous, most recently in Azerbaijan when he obeyed an order to let team-mate Hamilton past to attack Lando Norris, but Hamilton did not reciprocate when asked to hand the place back on the final lap.

Leclerc also shares with Villeneuve a romantic attachment to Ferrari and its almost mythological status. But Formula 1 is a brutal business, which can break up even the cosiest relationships. The inhabitants of this ecosystem are ultra-competitive individuals whose tolerance for failure is finite. Let us not forget that even though Villeneuve was Ferrari’s darling, he was sorely tested and had told close friends that he was considering leaving at the end of the 1982 season. McLaren had already made him an offer before he met his maker at Zolder.

The long period of dominance by Mercedes from the dawn of the hybrid era, followed by another streak in which Red Bull seemed unassailable, mean that people with short memories tend to overlook the historic precedent that F1 is a category where competitiveness waxes and wanes. Often the best a driver can hope for is to be in the right place at the right time, and stay there. It is hard to predict when competitiveness will fall off, for it doesn’t always happen around a major rule change, as evinced by Red Bull’s woes of the past 18 months.

That makes moving teams perilous. Fernando Alonso, for instance, threw over Renault for McLaren after two seasons of sustained championship-winning success. This and every career move he has made since failed to keep him in the right place to enjoy that same consistently high level of results.

Ferrari was a byword for dominance when Jean Todt was team principal, acting as a firewall for the staff against the excesses of the Italian media and supported to the hilt by president Luca di Montezemolo. But it was unable to sustain the momentum, even though Todt and technical director Ross Brawn tried to leave their affairs in order when they decided to move on. Raikkonen was an outsider for the 2007 drivers’ championship, aided in his campaign by McLaren’s self-destruction, but for Ferrari it has been a case of close-but-no-cigar ever since – attended by a revolving door of senior management as the old habits of internal politics set in again in Maranello. In 2014 no fewer than three people held the office of team principal, one of whom – Stefano Domenicali – was effectively forced out because he refused to scapegoat-fire the head of the engine department.

That was the year Alonso decided he’d had enough, after coming near, but not quite near enough, to winning the title in 2010 and 2012. Diminishing returns had set in after that. Later in the decade, a few rounds of hirings and firings later, there were signs of a reboot under Mattia Binotto, and Sebastian Vettel looked like he might have a chance in 2017... only to self-destruct along with his car’s reliability. And, lo, as with Alonso, what had seemed to be a relationship of mutual admiration between team and driver dissolved into rancour. >>

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“During 2019 there was more innuendo. Nothing was proved, openly at least”

History repeating

Leclerc's tenure at Ferrari began during what seemed to be an uptick in performance, but already there were mutterings in the wider F1 firmament about the contents of the engine bay. It was known that Ferrari had successfully introduced the so-called turbulent jet ignition technology, in which a secondary chamber containing a richer fuel mix than the primary chamber is used to create the initial burn. There was nothing illegal in this – it simply enabled higher compression ratios and leaner fuel mixes – and rivals naturally rushed to copy.

During 2019 there was more innuendo, this time claiming Ferrari was circumventing the fuel-flow sensor. Nothing was proved, openly at least, but at the beginning of 2020 the FIA announced it had reached a “confidential settlement” with Ferrari. When the season finally got going after the COVID delay, Ferrari had a shocker.

There was another flash of promise at the beginning of the new ground-effect era in 2022 when Leclerc won from pole position in Bahrain and Australia. But Ferrari slipped back relative to Red Bull as the year wore on and Leclerc finished a distant second. Since then there has been more instability at senior level as leading engineers David Sanchez and Enrico Cardile departed, and Ferrari has continued to struggle with in-season development.

Through 2023 and early 2024 the majority of upgrade packages failed to yield the anticipated effects. The cars were edgy and unpredictable to drive, which Leclerc could live with – just about – but team-mate Carlos Sainz disliked. But tuning the car more to Sainz's liking seemed to make it harder for Leclerc to extract the maximum.

It looked like Ferrari had made a breakthrough in the summer of 2024 when it shut down its wind tunnel and replaced the rolling road with a belt material that more closely resembled actual asphalt. The current generation of ground-effect cars runs at such low ride heights that such details are increasingly critical. Further development turned the SF-24 into one of the most competitive cars on the grid, enabling Leclerc to add wins in Italy and the USA to his victory in Monaco earlier that season.

Hopes were therefore high ahead of this year, where he was to be joined by »

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Leclerc's most recent victory was at last year's United States GP

"It's a matter of not hearing the noise around the team, but be focused on our own thing"

Hamilton. It's fair to say the season hasn't panned out as expected. Instead of a pitched battle for supremacy between two greats, the narrative has been one of continuous frustration. Even the Chinese GP weekend, where Hamilton won the sprint race, was ruined by both Ferraris being disqualified – Hamilton for excess plank wear, Leclerc for the car being underweight. It was a grotesquely public episode of sloppy execution.

For the remainder of the season there has been a suspicion that Ferrari is having to compromise its set-ups to avoid plank wear because the SF-25 only achieves peak performance at very low ride heights. The Hungaroring was a case in point, where Leclerc qualified on pole but his pace abruptly fell off on his last set of tyres. George Russell, following in his Mercedes, speculated that Ferrari had upped the rear-tyre pressures to protect the plank. Ferrari tried to wave off this theory but it remains plausible. All of this in spite of switching to a new rear suspension geometry at Spa.

So, having expected to challenge for the world championship, Ferrari and its drivers have once again had to reset their expectations. Now the hope is to win a grand prix before season's end – a far more modest goal.

"I'm not sure what the future holds but I'm pretty sure that Ferrari will hold its history and its iconic status, which comes obviously with a lot of hype, a lot of expectations, and it's up to us to manage it in a better way," said Leclerc in Baku.

"I don't think that this should be in any way an excuse for not performing. Ferrari has had so much success and it's not like when they've had that success they didn't have the hype that came with it.

"I think as a team it's just a matter of not really hearing the noise around the team, but just be focused on our own thing – and this is what I've been doing since I started with the team. Obviously in 2019 it was a little bit more difficult because I was young, everything was new – I mean, I'm still young but... there was also a lot of hype about me being in red for my second year in Formula 1.

"But since then it's important to do a step back and to not always react on emotions and on what's being said around us. I think it's very important to just stay focused. And on that I think we are doing a good job – but not good enough, because we must be back winning soon." >>

LECLERC AT FERRARI

Starts 144 (3rd in all-time Ferrari list)

Wins 8 (9th)

Poles 27 (2nd)

Fastest laps 10 (=9th)

Points 1564

Championship positions 4th, 8th,

7th, 2nd, 5th, 3rd, 5th

Up to and including 2025 Singapore GP

THE HEIR TO VILLENEUVE?

Although it was by no means inevitable that Ferrari would be Charles Leclerc's Formula 1 destination, the possibility was in the air from the moment he signed on with Nicolas Todt's All Road Management in 2011. Todt had – and continues to enjoy – strong links with the team on account of his father Jean having overseen its most recent period of sustained success in the early 2000s. Nicolas was managing Felipe Massa and Leclerc's godfather Jules Bianchi at the time, both of whom were in the Ferrari ecosystem. Todt Jr's partnership with future Ferrari team principal Fred Vasseur in the ART Grand Prix team made him an influential conduit of young talent, and he continues to be so: Martinius Stenshorne, another driver on the ARM books, is a member of McLaren's junior programme and stepped up to F2 in Baku.

Todt secured Leclerc a place on Ferrari's young-driver scheme, and by the time he reached F2 it was obvious he was destined for greatness. Shortly after his 'soft launch' into F1 via Alfa Romeo-sponsored Sauber (the Alfa brand at the time shared ownership with Ferrari, before the Prancing Horse was spun off separately and the rest of the Fiat marques merged into the Stellantis empire), *GP Racing* arranged an interview and photo shoot with him, after which photographer Glenn Dunbar murmured to this author: "That boy's going to be a winner. He's got the killer instinct. You can see it in his eyes..."

That sentiment was confirmed a year later when Leclerc took his maiden win in Belgium, then another at Monza, Ferrari's first victory on home soil in nine years. The tifosi entered a state of rapture. So too did

the grandees of the Ferrari empire.

Vice-chairman Piero Lardi Ferrari has seldom been one to embrace the limelight, though it is difficult to avoid these days when the presence of anyone remotely well-known in a garage is to invite the F1 TV cameras to zoom in. He preference for letting the likes of Luca di Montezemolo and Sergio Marchionne do the talking persists to this day, where he quietly lets CEO Benedetto Vigna and chairman John Elkann act as front men even though it was his father who founded the company.

So when he does talk in public, his sentiments carry resonance. And on Leclerc he has been unequivocal.

"Charles is a driver who would have been very much to my father's taste," he said in 2021. "An intelligent fellow, gifted with incredible talent in every respect, highly concentrated. If we give him the right car, he will give us a lot of pleasure."

Mattia Binotto, team principal at the time, put Ferrari's words in context. "The one that Enzo Ferrari liked the most was Gilles Villeneuve," he said. "In his way of driving, he was always very spontaneous and fresh. He gave everything he had to deliver the most, and was crazy enough and capable of doing outstanding qualifying laps. And so he is one of these drivers that create the passion in the tifosi. Because he was really doing his best always."

Those comparisons might have seemed far-fetched to some at the time but, four years later, they do not. Leclerc may not have racked up the same volume of wins as the

"That boy's going to be a winner. He's got the killer instinct. You can see it in his eyes..."

likes of Alberto Ascari, Niki Lauda and Michael Schumacher, let alone the championships, but his capacity to take a car by the proverbial scruff of the neck and do great things with it is very much in the mould of Villeneuve. And the fans continue to venerate him for it.

You could almost taste his frustration in the Hungarian Grand Prix this year when, after qualifying on pole, he slipped back in the latter stages of the race. And his gung-ho pass on George Russell at Zandvoort was a delightful throwback to a less prescriptive age: shades of Villeneuve's dice with Rene Arnoux for second place at Dijon in 1979.

Yes, Enzo Ferrari would have loved everything about Charles Leclerc – except, perhaps, for the fact that he has a powerful manager. Famously, Enzo had a veritable fit of the vapours when Juan Manuel Fangio arrived to finalise a contractual negotiation with his agent in attendance... ❄



SCHLEGELMILCH

Villeneuve's legendary
derring-do finds echoes
in tifosi's current darling

"His capacity to take a car by the scruff of the neck is very much in the mould of Villeneuve"



MARCEL VAN DOORST/EYEIMAGES/NURPHOTO

Piero Lardi Ferrari reckons
dad Enzo would have
relished Leclerc's talent



THE 2025 DEVELOPMENT WAR IS STILL BEING FOUGHT

*Everyone has been focused on next season's rules for months, right?
Well, as ever in Formula 1, things aren't quite that simple...*

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

THERE WAS A SEED PLANTED by Williams team principal James Vowles last year, as he plotted his team's course back to the big time. After many years spent floundering at the back of the Formula 1 order, Williams had been looking to find the best way to demonstrate its behind-closed-doors infrastructural revolution, as it updated its old systems and processes. Vowles, leaning on his past experiences with Mercedes, felt that putting most of the Grove team's eggs in the 2026 basket would be the best way forward.

Soon, that seemed to be the rationale for most. Other teams openly suggested that their 2025 efforts would be sparing at best, before diverting focus to next year's technical overhaul. The question became this: would anyone even dare to develop their cars over 2025 at all?

It turned out that there was plenty of room for teams to accommodate a bit of development for this season. Even Williams, which had sworn off its focus on 2025 in favour of 2026, trickled out a smattering of new parts across the first half of the year. The rationale was that there were already new designs in the pipeline when the launch specification of the car was frozen late last year, and that there was time to refine it to ensure the car could stay competitive through the season. »





While Alpine's focus is on 2026, it's still open to making tweaks that are cheap in terms of resource...

HONE/LAT/GETTY IMAGES



...and Sauber had a change of approach once Binotto had arrived at the team

MORGESE/NURPHOTO/GETTY IMAGES

There's still been value in developing the cars this year. Although the 2026 aero regulations largely reverse many of the changes implemented with the current generation, maintaining some degree of effort on 2025 ensures that the teams' infrastructures can remain up to date. Teams have continued to update the bigger ticket items, such as floors and wings, to pursue the larger financial gains accrued by jumping a few spots in the constructors' standings – to a certain point, at least. Red Bull, for example, owes its recent results at Monza and Baku to work carried out in 2025; having learned from last year's struggles on low-downforce circuits, it defined a proper Monza package to glean more straightline speed. That it had boosted its own floor performance with a series of updates through the year generally made this possible.

It helps that there's a more modular approach to F1 car builds, given the scope of the cost cap. Teams are more accustomed to enshrouding crash structures within aerodynamic panels, or splitting up the bodywork into smaller pieces, cutting the costs associated with any required re-homologation of the larger parts. Even as the season enters its latter stages, there's still a sprinkling of development work on 2025 going on at many of the teams' factories, as the engineers close out the current rules with the final cherry on the cake.

CHASING THE 'LOW EFFORT', LOW-HANGING FRUIT

Across the second half of the season, many of the teams on the grid have kept a small group of engineers focused on chasing tiny gains from their 2025 cars. With modern manufacturing techniques, this is made possible; through rapid prototyping (better known as 3D printing) the teams have been able to quickly produce small parts that can evoke greater levels of performance from the existing infrastructure around the car.

This is made possible with the simulation techniques that are commonplace in modern F1. While wind tunnels and seven-post rigs are vital for a more holistic approach to car design and vehicle dynamics testing respectively, small additions can be implemented with any spare computational fluid dynamics (CFD) time available.

"Right now, we've shifted all of our main focus to 2026, but there are sometimes things that you can get with CFD, which don't require a wind tunnel running," explains Sauber sporting director Inaki Rueda. "Or there's things that maybe you've tried in the past that you were not sure about, and now you can just rerun it on CFD. So it's the low-hanging fruit; it's not something you spend a lot of time on."

Rueda offers the example of Sauber's recent Zandvoort update, which included an additional winglet to the existing cluster of aero devices attached to the outside of the rear uprights. It's only small in theory but, in such an aero-critical part of the car, it will have an effect on improving downforce and flow at the rear: "We haven't redone the whole brake drum. If you look at it, it's just an appendage to an existing brake drum. We're basically



glueing a winglet to an existing brake drum."

Alpine executive technical director David Sanchez has revealed that the Enstone team was working to a similar framework, although it has long since called off its wider-scale development over 2025. The Renault-owned operation, having cycled out at the bottom of the constructors' standings, has chosen to focus on next season, where it will incongruously run with Mercedes powertrains after killing off its own power unit project.

That doesn't preclude it from making the smaller-scale modifications that, while not responsible for colossal leaps in lap time, can at least make the most of the existing parts on the car.

"I think at this stage of the season you can expect [small updates]," Sanchez reflected after F1's summer break. "I doubt there's anyone developing in anger a floor or something which is high cost or high resource demand. This area on the brake duct [the A525 sporting similar updates to Sauber at Zandvoort] is quite cheap and quick to develop or evaluate."

"We keep having people thinking in the background and when an idea comes up, if it's quick and easy to evaluate, then we have a great CFD and then if we like what we see, we bring it to the race car. It's not a big component, it doesn't require a lot of design time or design resource, so that's why I'm saying it's quite cheap in terms of resource."

It's worth explaining how rapid prototyping makes this possible. This goes beyond the usual polymer powders or similar materials that home 3D printing enthusiasts employ; teams have been keen to bring aboard partners who can develop bespoke solutions – carbon fibre filament or ultrasonic additive »



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manufacturing products to render parts from metal. This has been a key part of F1 manufacturing for over a decade, and some engine parts are even produced from the latter scenario.

Since parts can be manufactured quickly and reasonably cheaply, these can be affixed into position – and easily removed, if practice sessions show the test items in a different light to CFD simulations.

2025'S DIFFERENT APPROACHES

A handful of teams have opted for a similar strategy to Williams, in taking a more hands-off approach to development for 2025. As discussed, Alpine is one of those teams – and given its lowly standing this season, it very much feels that this year has been a sacrificial lamb. Others, however, have found a happy medium in spinning the two plates throughout the year – although, for most, this has wound down following the summer break.

McLaren had continued to put effort into making its MCL39's high ceiling of performance easier to access, and has done so in its own unique way. The Canadian Grand Prix weekend in June offers a perfect example, in that the team revised its front wing to

now feature a series of small winglets on the inside face of the endplate to improve the outwash effect generated. Although it conducted the customary back-to-back runs with it in practice in Montreal, McLaren didn't race with it until the next round in Austria, having first digested the data.

But McLaren's development has, for the time being, slowed down slightly as it puts a little more focus on next year's regulations, aside from the usual circuit-specific array of wing variants. Red Bull, meanwhile, has continued to try to uncover the root cause of its RB21's recalcitrance – a pursuit that has shown good results so far post-summer. The floor updates have been the face of that return to form, helping Max Verstappen deliver dominant wins at Monza and Baku. Much of those updates have been underneath, with a redefined floor body and fences, but this has also extended to the floor edge wings to extract more load from the underbody. This has been underpinned by its greater understanding of what the car needs with regards to set-up.

When you look at the teams lining the second half of the pecking order, the approaches have tended to differ. Take Alpine's sacrifice of 2025, and compare that to Sauber. The Swiss team had, under its previous head honchos in Andreas Seidl and Oliver Hoffmann, »



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chosen to earmark its resources for 2026, when it will first become known as Audi. Following their departures, and the installation of Mattia Binotto as chief technical officer and chief operating officer, Sauber elected to change that.

Although the team was effectively treading water until the handover date, Binotto reasoned that there was no point in hanging around. He felt that the team should be keeping its development tools sharp by reopening development at the end of 2024 and into 2025. Indeed, the series of floor updates added to this year's C45 in the opening stages of the year demonstrated that the team could enact a leap from the back of the grid, and into the points-paying positions.

Like Sauber, Haas has continued to develop: partly out of necessity, and partly due to its initial gameplan. The team stumbled upon a chronic weakness of this year's VF-25, where it struggled to maintain downforce through high-load, high-speed corners. The car struggled to contend with Turns 9 and 10 in Australia at the same speed as its competitors.

With limited testing and simulation work, Haas put together a floor update for April's Japanese GP that set it on the right path. At the time, team principal Ayao Komatsu explained that the team had perhaps encountered similar issues with the floor that the >>





Komatsu says small team at Haas still focused on 2025 found a worthwhile gain

GALLOWAY/LAT

likes of Ferrari and Racing Bulls experienced last year, which prompted a series of roll-backs and diversions into different directions.

Having largely set that right, Haas continued to plot developments through 2025 – and has one in the pipeline for the US GP at Austin to finish off the year. Like the earlier examples, the American-owned team kept engineers back to see whether there was any more low-hanging fruit that was ripe for the picking.

“I wouldn’t say it was no sacrifice at all, because we left a small team working on the 2025 car,” Komatsu explains. “But it’s not we were really focused on it beyond a certain point. We left one small team just to see if we can find a sizeable gain or not.

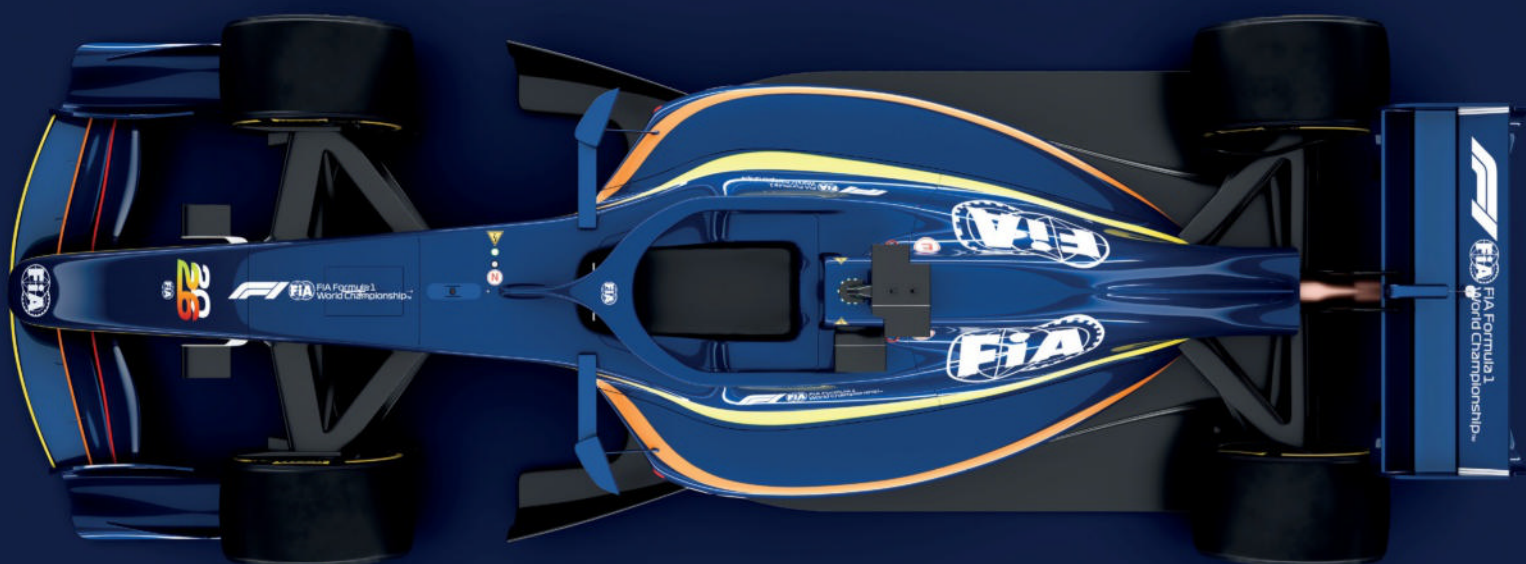
“In a way, it was... I wouldn’t say a surprise, but positive that we actually found a gain that was worthwhile us making it, considering the money as well. In fact, we didn’t deviate from our baseline plan; we had a few different options where, you know, if the car was amazingly competitive at the start of the year, we can shift our focus on 2026 earlier.

“Clearly, that wasn’t the case. If the car was really, really terrible, we had to spend more time on 2025, sacrificing more on 2026. We didn’t have to do that. So, we did it on the baseline strategy – it’s as we planned, as far as we are concerned.”



All teams will employ a 2025-upgrade cost-benefit ratio

ECONOMOU/NURPHOTO/GETTY IMAGES



2026 will bring an end to
current ground-effect era
with move to active aero

FIA

WILL TEAMS CONTINUE TO PURSUE 2025 GAINS THIS LATE IN THE SEASON?

If there's scope in the budget and in simulation data, there's no reason why teams can't keep finessing their 2025 machines until the final few races. Teams will operate on a cost-benefit ratio, and a perceptible increase in lap time or general performance will be measured against the resources required to implement it.

At this late stage, it won't be about developing a part that might not have an immediate impact but can open different development paths – there's simply not the time to do that. Instead, it'll be down to the quick-and-dirty little additions if teams want to make any final changes to their cars.

But the attention has, for most, shifted away. While 2026 is predominantly characterised by the lukewarm reception to the greater electrification in its powertrains, and occasional moments of fearmongering as drivers would rather not have to acquaint themselves with the resulting complexities, the aerodynamic formula is changing. After four years back, the ground-effect tunnels defining the car's nether regions will slide into the ether, as they did at the end of 1982. Three-element front wings and more conventional rear wings define the bounds of the active aerodynamic formula, and team principals lobbied for a bit more aero furniture having been largely constrained by the current rules' aim of producing closer racing.

Iterations of the new cars have been available to most of the drivers in the simulator, with the continued development marginally upgrading their opinions – which admittedly started at rock-bottom.

Yet there's still time to perfect the current machines. While some might have sworn off development and could give fewer than two hoots about their final constructors' championship placing – owing to the greater aero testing allowance associated with finishing lower down the pecking order – others see the opportunity to move up. The rationale might change; some might want to go all-in on a specific circuit, others might want to seek validation or keep unravelling the root causes for underperformance. The idea that these cars have conveniently reached the end of their development path within four years is misplaced; there's always more performance to find. It just depends how willing a team is to uncover it.

Red Bull proved back in 2021 that it was possible to keep pushing its developments through and simultaneously capture a lightning start to a new ruleset in 2022. That said, McLaren and Ferrari did the opposite in the transition from 2008 to 2009. Will it really hurt a team's 2026 project by developing a few aero tweaks this late on? Probably not; maybe it's worth it to save the \$25,000 or so needed for a new front wing element for next year. Maybe that \$25,000 gets you the extra points needed to earn an extra \$8-9million from a higher championship position. Is it worth the gamble? *W*

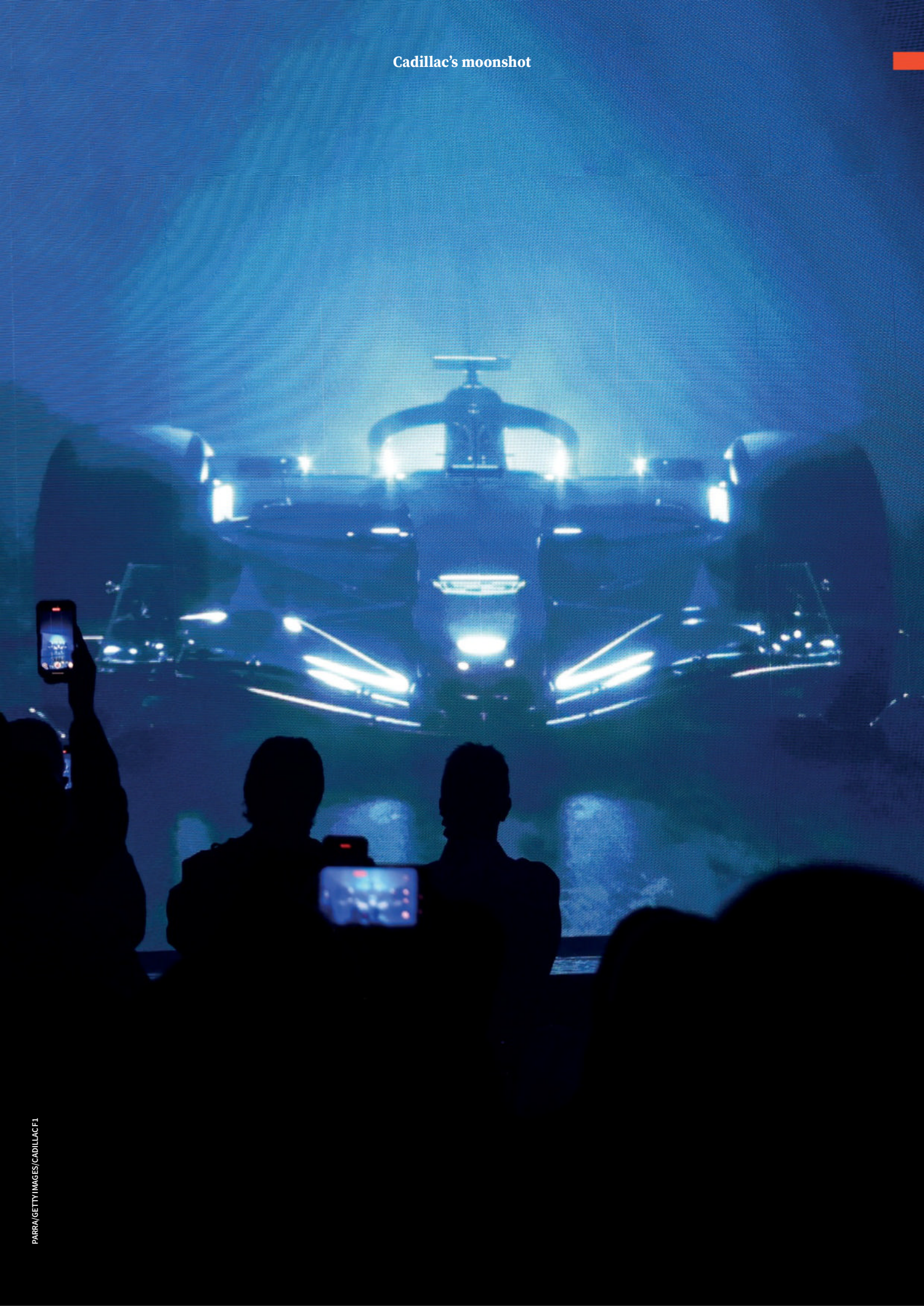
INSIDE F1'S LATEST TEAM AND
ITS NASA-INSPIRED APPROACH

CADILLAC'S MOONSHOT

*After announcing multiple grand prix winners Valtteri Bottas
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hurtling towards the 2026 Formula 1 grid*

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Bottas and Perez signed up for their experience and GP-winning pedigree

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“WE’RE NOT PUTTING A MAN ON THE MOON, BUT IT FEELS LIKE IT SOMETIMES”



Structure offers sense of responsibility to all staff

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TWG CEO Towriss oversaw Caddy entry

PADOCKER/NURPHOTO/GETTY IMAGES



CADILLAC

Lowdon sees “opportunity” of working over multiple sites



CADILLAC
FORMULA 1™ TEAM



Cadillac, Formula 1's first genuinely new team since Haas a decade ago in 2016, is under no illusions about the challenges it is facing. It's looking at them all day, ticking one second at a time. On the walls of all its offices, the General Motors-backed squad has clocks counting down to its two major deadlines: the fire-up of its very first car in January, and the first race of the 2026 season in Melbourne in early March.

Cadillac's entry into the series has been a complicated journey, and that's putting it mildly. Originally pitched under the Andretti Cadillac umbrella and spearheaded by Michael Andretti, the team was denied entry by F1 chiefs in January 2024 after the commercial rightsholder felt the squad would not bring enough value to the grid to warrant adding an 11th team and diluting the prize fund. After Andretti stepped aside and GM took on a bigger role, including the commitment to develop its own power unit for 2028, the rebranded Cadillac entry – this time overseen by Andretti Global parent company TWG Motorsports and its CEO Dan Towriss – finally received the green light last November over the Las Vegas Grand Prix weekend. Official approval followed in March this year.

But to suggest that Las Vegas was the start signal for Cadillac would be selling the team short. By then, its build-up had long been under way, even without approval, under former Virgin team boss Graeme Lowdon. By Vegas the team had already employed around 300 people and the number was over 400 at the time of writing, with recruitment speeding up to around one new hire per day over 2025, the aim to double its workforce to 600 ahead of the first race.

Cadillac's key technical leadership has already been in place for some time, with former Renault engineer Nick Chester installed as chief technical officer, former Williams man Jon Tomlinson as head of aerodynamics and John McQuilliam, who worked with Lowdon at Manor, the team's chief designer. Long-time Renault and Alpine stalwart Rob White signed up as chief operating officer, while Cadillac can also lean on the experience of Pat Symonds as engineering consultant. Russ O'Brien became CEO of TWG GM Performance Power Units, overseeing the engine programme.

Other key hires include race team manager Peter Crolla – formerly at Haas – and former Miami Grand Prix CEO Tyler Epp, who recently joined as the team's commercial chief. They will eventually be spread over Cadillac's European hub in Silverstone, a yet to be finished US headquarters in Fishers, Indiana as well as General Motors facilities in Michigan and North Carolina, where the team's simulator is based. It has also invested in upgrades to Toyota's wind tunnel in Cologne.

With its multi-location approach to a set of complex challenges and immovable deadlines, Lowdon says his squad has taken inspiration from NASA's history-making Apollo programme for its very own moonshot. "It's always a challenge to manage over multiple sites, but we see it as an opportunity," Lowdon said earlier this year as Autosport visited its Silverstone factory. "We've got a massive necessity for peer-to-peer interaction, so we



need an engineer [at Silverstone] talking to an engineer in Charlotte and another one in Warren, Michigan, or eventually in Fishers. And so, we've looked to have a very flat management structure. It's highly modelled on the Apollo project. It's very similar. OK, we're not putting a man on the moon, but it feels like it sometimes... We've got a lot of experienced people here and we can offer them this flat structure and responsibility. When that car turns a wheel for the first time, everyone in here will be able to point at it and say, 'I did that'. It's mission control instead of command and control."

The flurry of incoming transfers shows how much momentum the team is building, the uncertainty over its entry long in the rear-view mirror. But as of now, Cadillac is still a team without a car and, while it is expected to do a deal with its 2026 engine supplier Ferrari to conduct Testing of a Previous Car, it is

"CADILLAC'S ENTRY HAS BEEN COMPLICATED, AND THAT'S PUTTING IT MILDLY"

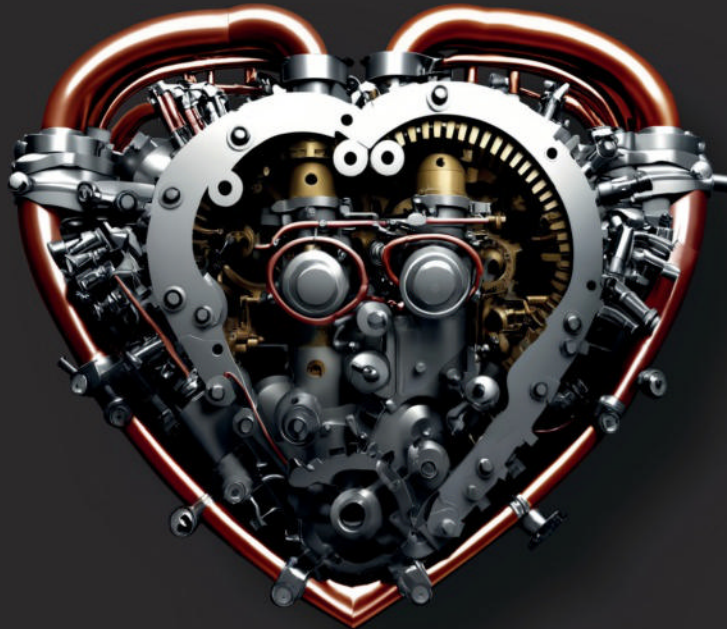
currently resorting to the virtual world to ensure it is ready. Just like it couldn't afford to wait for an entry to build up the team itself, it can't sit still until Australia 2026 to prepare to be an operational part of the F1 grid.

Over the Italian Grand Prix weekend in September, the team simulated taking part in the actual event, with its car instead being driven in the simulator in Charlotte. In its operation rooms across both sides of the Pond, the team fully simulated the timetable of an actual grand prix weekend, down to making its drivers unavailable to the engineers due to simulated media duties.

Simon Pagenaud (2016 IndyCar champion), two-time F1 starter Pietro Fittipaldi and sportscar driver Charlie Eastwood are all part of Cadillac's sim programme.

"We have a plan to steadily build up so that when we >>

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get to Melbourne, we hit the ground running and we're not in a position where people are hearing voices for the first time or working with each other for the first time," explains Lowdon. "Similarly, there's the simulator programme, which is operating at full strength and we'll be introducing car testing as well this year."

That testing work is soon going to start including its race drivers, with experienced free agents – 10-time GP winner Valtteri Bottas and six-time victor Sergio Perez – signing up in August. Former Red Bull man Perez made his first visit to the Silverstone plant in late September, while Bottas is still bound to Mercedes commitments. Both drivers are in a very similar stage of their careers: mid-thirties race winners who lost their seat at the end of 2024, but felt the burning ambition to

“THIS IS A SPORT I LOVE AND THIS PROJECT JUST BRINGS ME THAT EXCITEMENT BACK”

return to F1 even if it won't be at the front anytime soon.

"Coming back to F1, my main target is to enjoy it again," says Perez. "I had a very difficult year, my final year with Red Bull. This is a sport I love and this project just brings me that excitement back, because I'm able to put in all my years of experience, the different teams I worked with, to help this team move forward.

"We know we don't have the time on our side, but we also can be a big surprise, because we're bringing as much experience and commitment as possible. Not only with the drivers, but this is the same for all the areas in the team. It's a new team, but everyone has a lot of experience in the sport."

Bottas also says he was convinced by the prospect of being able to steer an ambitious start-up from the ground up, despite the prospect of what will likely

be a difficult maiden season: "Early this year, it was clear for me that this is what I want. I want to be part of this great brand, this start-up F1 team, but with great structure and big goals. Of course, we're realistic. There's going to be a mountain of work to do, and it's going to be probably a difficult start because it is F1, but we're not there to stay at the back. We don't want to finish last. And I believe with this structure, with this group, these people, there's no reason why we shouldn't be able to get relatively quickly up to the pace and enjoy some success."

For Lowdon, it was a no-brainer to bring in the most experienced and successful free agents available at the expense of promising rookies, at least for the team's formative years: "They're two incredibly experienced drivers, but I should stress as well that these guys are quick. They're not hired just for the number of grands prix that they've entered. The experience is important. But these are two very, very quick race drivers and I can't wait to go racing with them. I've had the benefit of bringing a new team in before so I know that some of the pitfalls and attributes for drivers are really quite important."

Any concerns from American fans over the lack of homegrown representation were soon eased by the signing of test driver Colton Herta (see page 51). The 25-year-old Californian, who moves over from the Andretti Global IndyCar team that shares TWG Motorsports ownership with the F1 operation, left his plum seat for a test role, which will include racing in Formula 2 in 2026 as he grabs what he calls his "last shot" to make it to F1.

While not setting such lofty targets as NASA's series of moon landings, the first new squad in F1 in a decade is under no illusions of the challenges it is facing. To quote NASA flight director Gene Kranz, portrayed by Ed Harris in the popular 1995 movie *Apollo 13*: "Failure is not an option." ✱

Team's steady build-up aimed to ensure it hits the ground running

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CADILLAC

THE NEXT AMERICAN F1 STAR?

Cadillac's goal of conquering Formula 1 has also become that of IndyCar star Colton Herta and, while there are still plenty of obstacles in his way, there is no questioning his commitment. A nine-time race winner with Andretti Global, Herta has decided to give up his position near the top of the American open-wheel food chain for a test driver role with F1's newest team.

"This is a dream opportunity, and one I've been working towards for a long time," says Herta, who was seventh in this year's IndyCar standings after taking runner-up in 2024. "To be part of Cadillac F1's entry at such a pivotal time is something I couldn't pass up."

As part of his preparation for an eventual F1 seat, Herta will not only conduct private testing and free practice running, but will also fully abandon IndyCar to brave the vagaries of a 2026 F2 campaign with an as-yet unnamed squad, with no guarantee

that an F1 seat will follow.

"The easy thing would be to stay in IndyCar," Herta said on the *Off Track* podcast hosted by James Hinchcliffe and Alexander Rossi. "But this is my last shot at it. As a racing driver, you are constantly betting on yourself. I believe I'm fast enough to do it. If I didn't think I can do it, I would stay in IndyCar."

Herta came close before when a Portimao test with McLaren led to interest from Red Bull, which wanted to place him in an AlphaTauri seat for 2023. The lack of required FIA superlicence points held Herta back, and he still needs to earn six more over the course of 2026 to qualify, which he can gain with a top eight classification in F2 and bolster with grand prix FP1 outings.

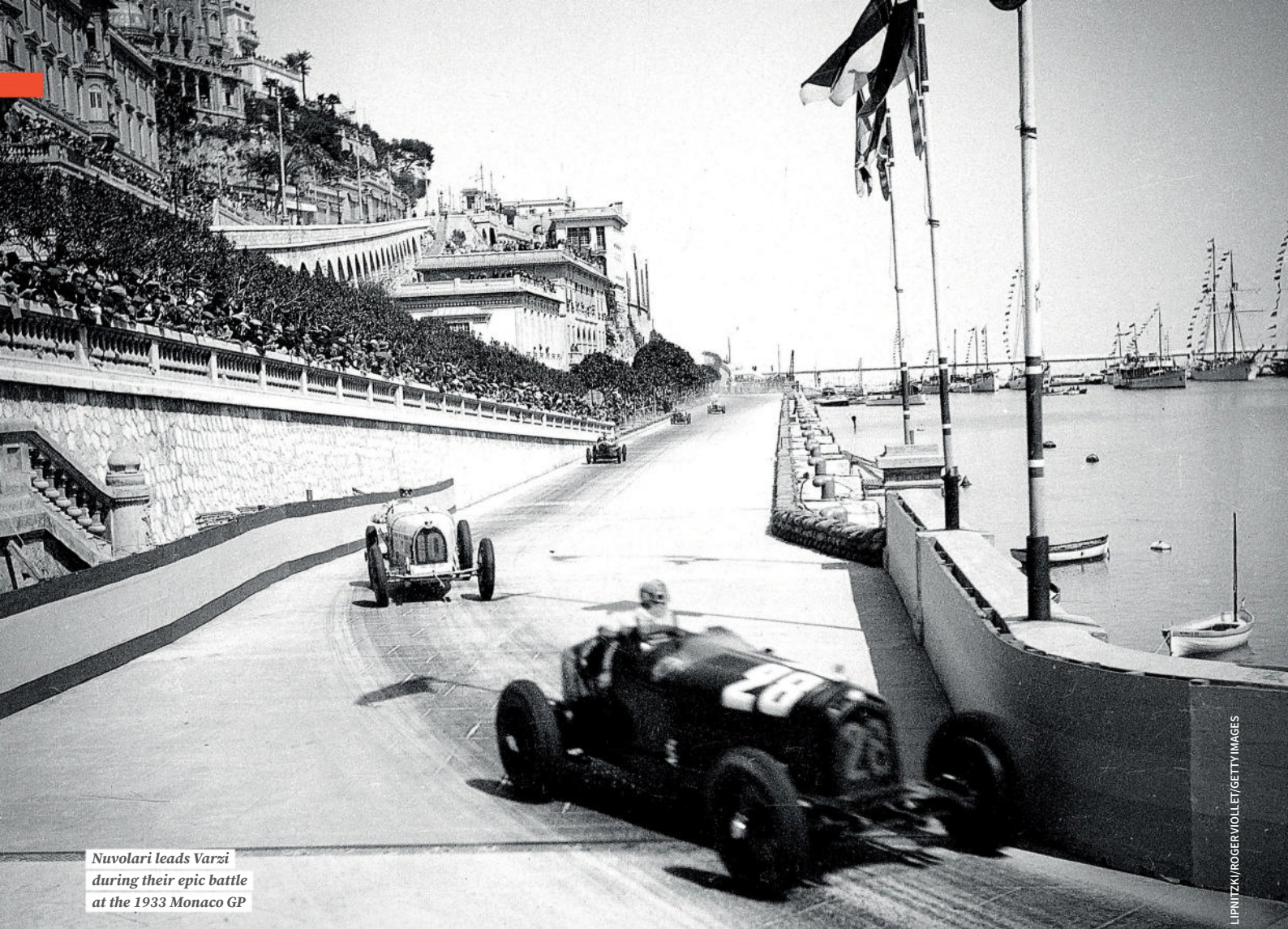
Herta therefore still has a mountain to climb, just like Cadillac itself, but his eventual presence on the grid would satisfy a desire from F1 to have a high-profile American driver at an American team, with the might of General Motors

behind the ambitious effort to become a competitive force. There is only so much that F1 owner Liberty Media can do to further grow the series in the US, which already has three grands prix, without having active and successful participants. A dream scenario of Herta and Cadillac finding success would therefore offer F1 management a whole new dynamic to make further inroads on the US market.

What's at stake isn't just Herta's own F1 chances, but also the perception that he will be creating for any of his compatriots who harbour similar ambitions – it's more than four decades since the last F1 win by an American driver. An F2 seat in isolation is already a lose-lose situation. If Herta excels it will be taken for granted, while a tough year – which, given the capricious nature of F2, is entirely possible – will already start damaging that perception. So, if Herta says he's betting on himself, perhaps F1 chiefs will quietly be doing the same.

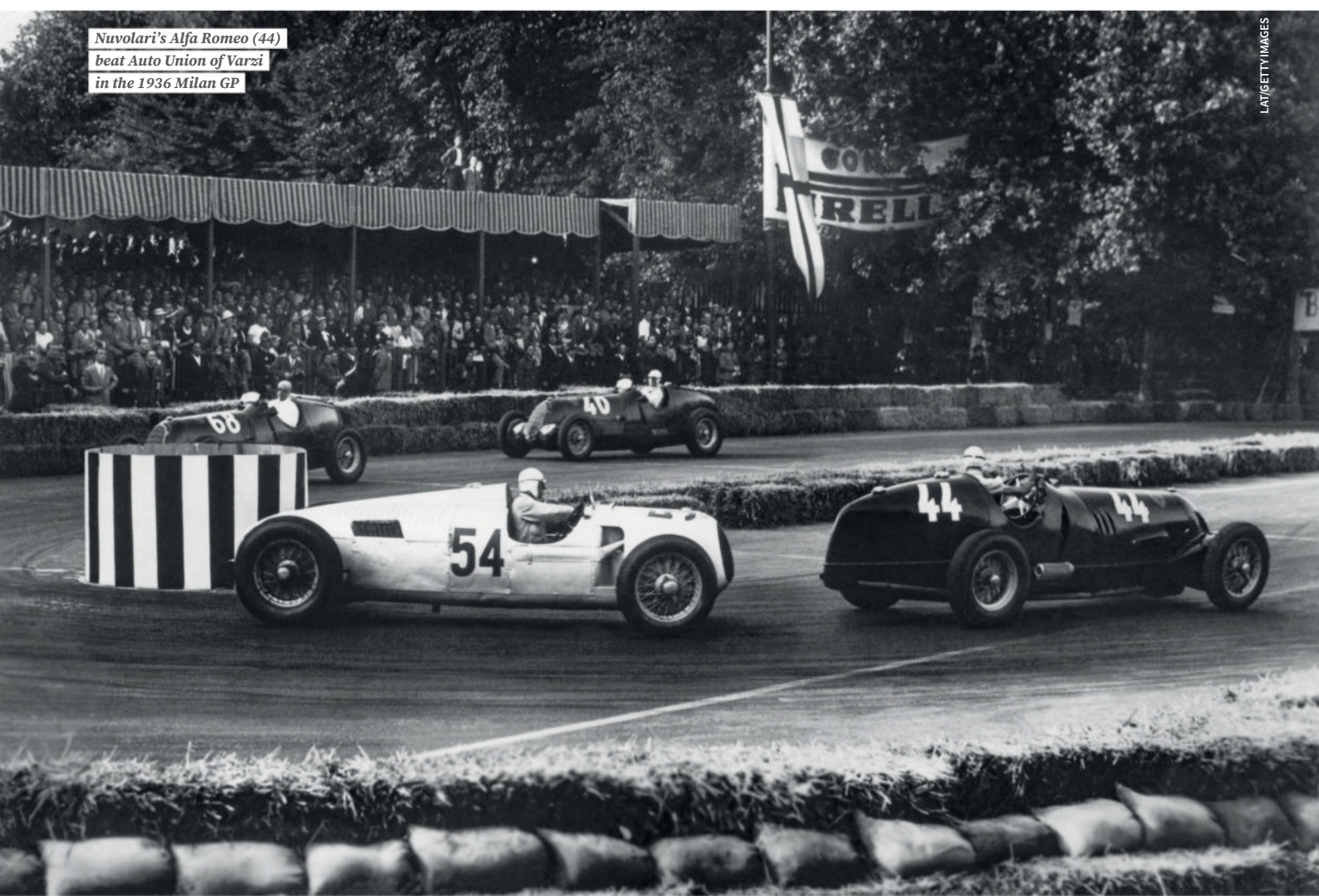
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Nuvolari leads Varzi
during their epic battle
at the 1933 Monaco GP

LIPNITZKI/ROGER VOLLLET/GETTY IMAGES



Nuvolari's Alfa Romeo (44)
beat Auto Union of Varzi
in the 1936 Milan GP

LAT/GETTY IMAGES



GRAND PRIX RACING'S FIRST GREAT RIVALRY

The battles between Tazio Nuvolari and Achille Varzi were more like Prost-Senna than Norris-Piastrri, but mutual respect remained to the very end

PAUL FEARNLEY

They wore matching jumpers. Not, you understand, their official Moto Bianchi attire – unusually, they were team-mates and class rivals on two wheels – but fashionable V-necked Fair Isle sweaters, picked out for their first race together in cars: the Tripoli GP of March 1928.

Tazio Nuvolari had purchased four Bugatti Type 35Cs for his new team, keeping two and selling two, one of which Achille Varzi bought. Although Varzi went on to finish third in Tripoli, in only his second race on four wheels – and his first since September 1926 – he was underwhelmed and suspicious. The victorious Nuvolari had gained 13 minutes in 260 miles, passing at will after pitstops. Were some Bugattis more equal than others? After all, it was Nuvolari's name above the door, and his mechanic who prepared the cars.

At the following month's Circuit of Alessandria, Nuvolari won by six minutes, his car faultless. An ignition problem delayed runner-up Varzi. This dapper young man from Galliate, west of Milan, expected better. No matter that Nuvolari, 12 years his senior, had much more experience with racing cars. No matter that they had been friends since 1923. Two bulls; one field. Eclipsed, Varzi drove a Delage at the Rome GP in June, and thereafter self-entered his Bugatti, albeit without an uptick in results.

A family fortune accrued in textiles allowed Varzi options denied to the affluent rather than wealthy Nuvolari. For September's European GP at Monza, Italy's most prestigious race, he bought a stake in the Alfa Romeo P2 with which Giuseppe Campari had won

Pescara's Coppa Acerbo. Varzi didn't win at Monza but, co-driven by Campari, he beat Nuvolari into second place. They were duelling so intently, so intensely, that the Bugatti of Louis Chiron caught and passed them.

Varzi *did* win the corresponding race the following year, lapping runner-up Nuvolari, to complete a fruitful season that included victories at Alessandria, Rome and the Coppa Ciano at Livorno.

Nuvolari was realising how unsuited he was to being a

“Nuvolari was realising how unsuited he was to being a team boss and shut up shop”

team boss – disaffected Varzi's departure had left a hole in the budget – and he shut up shop mid-season. His foremost skill was still in demand at least, and he drove for Alfa Corse and in Scuderia Materassi's Talbot. Seeking consistency for 1930, however, he signed with Alfa, and (from June) also for fledgling semi-works team Scuderia Ferrari.

Italy was seeking a new speed king in the aftermath of Pietro Bordino's fatal accident while practising at Alessandria in 1928. The resultant argument between *Nuvolariani* and *Varziani*, fans fed breathless back-page stories, had become a soap opera verging on mythic.

Nuvolari beat Varzi's sister works Alfa Romeo 6C 1750 GS to win the 1930 Mille Miglia. That he did so by »

dousing his headlights to catch his quarry unawares was a tale pedalled by his riding mechanic, and repeated in Johnny Lurani's *Nuvolari* book of 1959. It is overplayed. The overtake indeed occurred on the run-in to the Brescia finish – no doubt Nuvolari enjoyed rubbing it in – but he had started 10 minutes later than Varzi, and was easily ahead on time. Plus, dawn had broken, the pair having battled through the night.

It is indicative, nevertheless, that the story was/is believed. Nuvolari's all-action/never-say-die style and attitude fired the imagination. Varzi's calculating, cynical approach engendered *only* admiration. He was the cognoscenti's choice. Nuvolari was a man of the people – and *Il Duce's* choice. Populism and propaganda were becoming tightly entwined with motor racing, the poster sport of the Speed Age. Benito Mussolini, a car enthusiast, understood how Nuvolari's driving for Alfa Romeo, state-owned from 1933, was a potent symbol of Italian manhood and industrial clout. A partnership red in tooth and claw.

The bloody-minded Varzi, meanwhile, raced in the French blue of Bugatti from 1931, although his personal, as opposed to works, Type 51 was red. Realpolitik. This followed on from his bold mid-season switch of 1930 to Maserati, Bologna's promising newcomers, after another fraught battle with Nuvolari, both in P2s, had caused their retirements in August from the Coppa Ciano, handing victory to Maserati's Luigi Fagioli. The Coppa Acerbo would have fallen to Fagioli too, but for CWP failure on the last lap. New team-mate Varzi swept by instead.

There was nothing fortunate about Varzi's subsequent Monza GP victory. His recovery from a stop for spark plugs was Nuvolari-esque, the crowd going wild when he took the lead on the final lap. Mobbed, the new champion of Italy deadpanned it. Overt acclaim was anathema. So, too, was the fact that Nuvolari had started the race despite talk of withdrawal because of a tyre issue – and in response to threats from upon high to do no such thing. This rivalry was spilling over.

“Ferrari was enraged by his defeat at home, especially as his number one appeared unconcerned”

Nuvolari edged it in 1931, winning a mud-caked Targa Florio, the Italian GP (having commandeered Campari's 8C) and the Coppa Ciano. Varzi's best was a victory in a Bugatti shared with Chiron at Montlhéry's GP de l'ACF. Leading by three laps, he equalled his best lap on the last tour of this 10-hour marathon. He liked to rub it in, too.

The pendulum continued to swing. Bugatti's T51 was no match for Alfa Romeo's Tipo B/P3, the first fully resolved monoposto GP car, in 1932, and Nuvolari won the European Championship. Whereupon cash-strapped Alfa Corse withdrew and put its Tipo Bs in storage. Nuvolari would have to make do with a 'stretched' Scuderia Ferrari 8C in 1933.

Varzi was fastest in practice in April at the Monaco GP, and so occupied the first pole position earned by effort

rather than gifted by ballot. Nuvolari qualified fourth. From there, they waged the greatest dice, swapping the lead at least 21 times before Varzi prevailed due to a penultimate lap three seconds better than his qualifying best. Even so, he was upstaged by the theatrical Nuvolari, who pushed his car aflame into the pits.

They were at it again a fortnight later. This time, however, both were upstaged: by controversy. Italy's national lottery was to be decided by the result of the Tripoli GP. Varzi, Nuvolari and Baconin Borzacchini, therefore, met with their ticket holders to strike a deal: the money was to be shared equally between 'The Six', no matter which of the three drivers won. This was no secret. No law was broken. A written agreement was notarised. And no decision was made as to the finishing order.

That changed as the start approached, Varzi calling correctly at an impromptu coin-toss with Nuvolari. In the event, of course, they fought like cat and dog. They couldn't help themselves. The money was forgotten as well as guaranteed. The stain, however, proved permanent, and Varzi, the winner by 0.2s, shouldered the shame.

It was a fractious season. Nuvolari, despite winning the Mille Miglia, split from Scuderia Ferrari to drive Maserati's response to Tipo B: the 8CM. Varzi waited with mounting impatience for Bugatti's T59. Outdated upon its delayed arrival, he gave it a subdued debut at the Spanish GP in September. Nuvolari, in contrast, drove like the devil, crashing from a healthy lead. Performances indicative of mindsets.

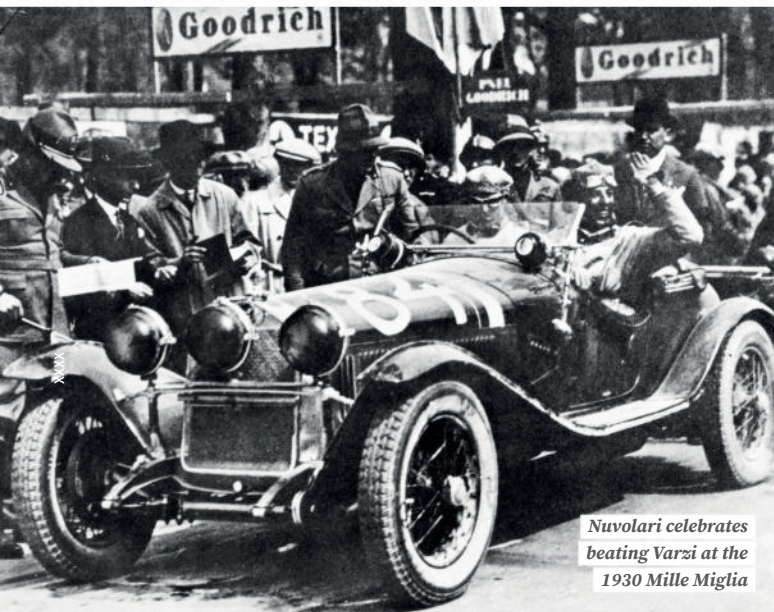
Varzi joined Ferrari in 1934 – finicky, he was never Enzo's cup of espresso. Nuvolari unexpectedly agreed to drive a (usually red) T59 at the major races. The biggest news, however, was that Fagioli had beaten them to the punch by landing a Mercedes-Benz for the new 750kg Formula. As good as he was, dark arts were surely involved in this decision.

Varzi enjoyed a successful season. He got his revenge for 1930 by winning the Mille Miglia. Ferrari, better organised and supplied than Scuderia Siena, which was running Nuvolari's sister 8C, fitted Pneugrippa'd tyres for the rain that lashed the closing stages. Varzi also became national champion for a second time, thanks to wins in Tipo B – released midway through 1933 to counter Nuvolari's Maserati – at Tripoli, Alessandria, and Sicily's Targa Florio. He also won Barcelona's Penya Rhin GP, and in Nice.

Nuvolari, left leg fractured in Alessandria – a racing incident with Varzi in bad weather – struggled with reliability. His consolation was beating Varzi in October at the Modena GP. Enzo was enraged by this defeat on home turf, especially because his number one appeared unconcerned. Was an Auto Union contract burning a hole in Varzi's pocket?

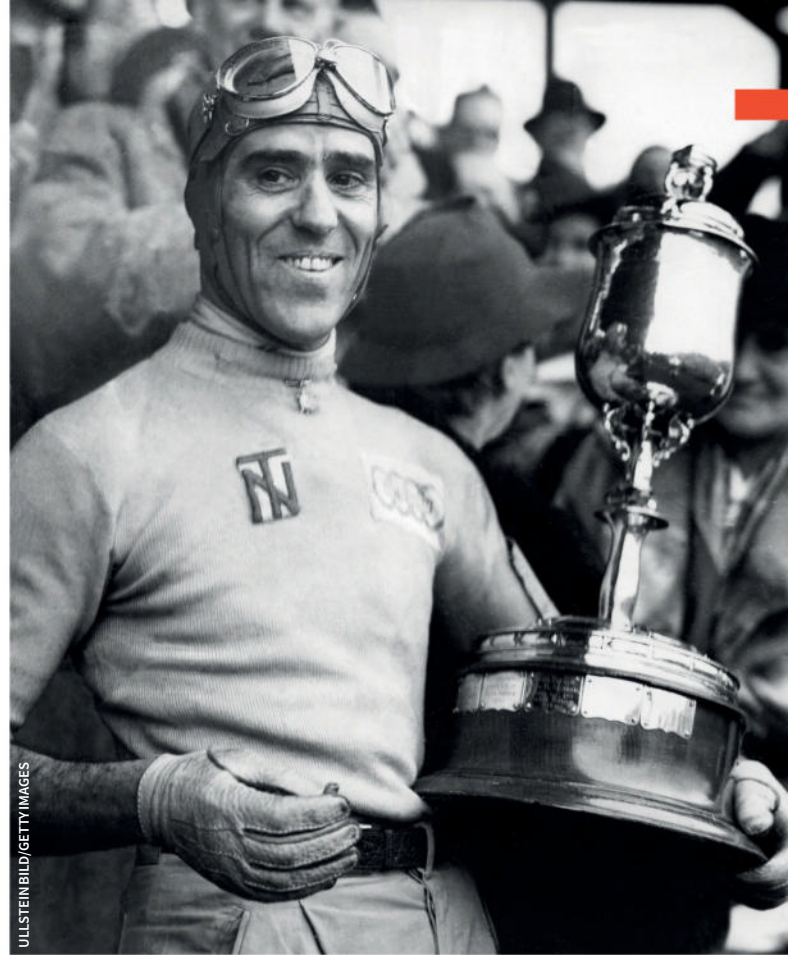
Both he and Nuvolari had sampled Ferdinand Porsche's radical Type A in 1934. Nuvolari grabbed some laps during practice sessions for September's Spanish and Czechoslovakian GPs, whereas Varzi had been awarded a private, no doubt more extensive, test at Monza in August. There, he drove Hans Stuck's car. Did Stuck >>

Nuvolari is regarded as the finest pre-Second World War driver, with a European title and Le Mans win on his CV



Nuvolari celebrates beating Varzi at the 1930 Mille Miglia

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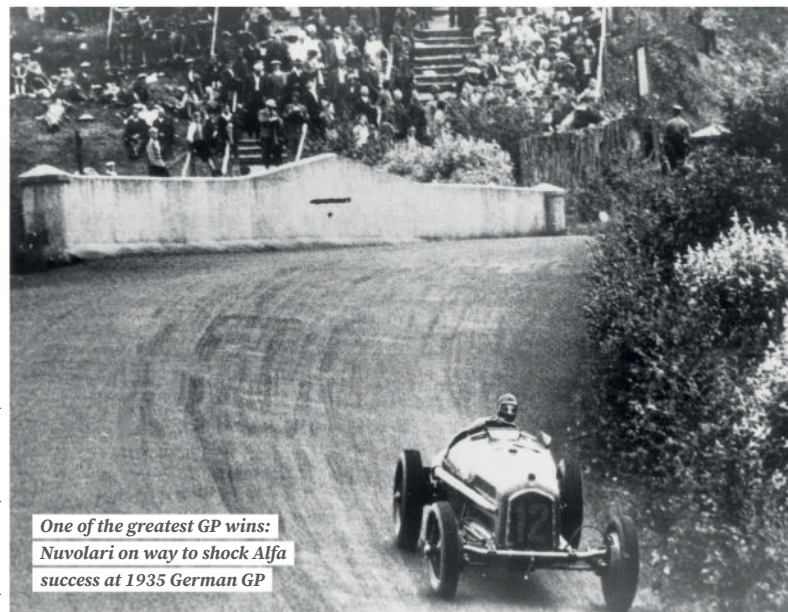


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Nuvolari at the 1931 Tourist Trophy in Northern Ireland

LAT/GETTY IMAGES/ULLSTEINBILD/GETTY IMAGES

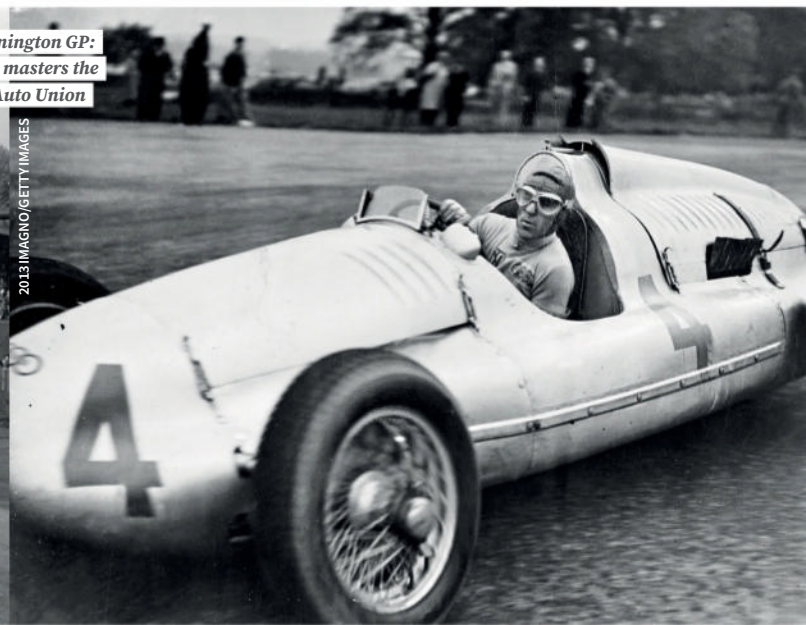


One of the greatest GP wins: Nuvolari on way to shock Alfa success at 1935 German GP



1938 Donington GP: Nuvolari masters the tricky Auto Union

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Varzi was one of the greats, but addiction hurt his career and reputation while at Auto Union in the 1930s



2013 MAGNO/GETTY IMAGES

Revenge after the Mille Miglia? Varzi won 1930 Targa Florio



Rarely a smiler: Varzi with Chiron after 1931 French GP victory

LAT/GETTY IMAGES



Varzi on his way to winning 1935 Coppa Acerbo for Auto Union

LAT/GETTY IMAGES



Did Varzi prevent Nuvolari from joining the Auto Union team?

KEYSTONE/GETTY IMAGES; RDB/ULLSTEIN BILD/GETTY IMAGES



Varzi recovered and drove for Alfa after WW2 but would die at Bern in 1948

and Varzi connive to blackball Nuvolari? Highly likely.

Varzi began this 1935 chapter by qualifying – in Stuck's miffed absence – on pole, comfortably faster than Nuvolari's Alfa, before dominating May's Tunis GP. He would lead August's Coppa Acerbo from start to finish, too. But the huge potential evinced by team newcomer Bernd Rosemeyer, another graduate from two wheels, put these into perspective. And all was dwarfed by Nuvolari's win at the German GP.

Nuvolari had vowed never again to drive for Ferrari. But, gazumped at Auto Union, and queered by Rudolf Caracciola's return to fitness and form at Mercedes-Benz, he had been persuaded to. Designer Vittorio Jano was the go-between – and Mussolini 'put in a word'.

Jano's new car ran late. So Nuvolari drove a Tipo B, engine stretched to 3.2 litres, chassis modified to accept independent front suspension, to his most miraculous victory. Varzi, never at his best at the Nurburgring, was a footnote in eighth. Upset at having run over Stuck's mechanic on the grid, he eventually handed over to a reserve driver.

He continued to shine, however, on Tripoli's sweeping, sand-swept Mellaha circuit. His third win in four years – it might have been four but for an unnecessary dice in 1935 with Nuvolari's lapped Alfa Romeo Bimotore – was gained despite using only fourth gear for the majority. Red and green team order flags fluttering, Varzi set the fastest lap on the last lap by way of insurance. A formidable effort. His anger at Marshal Balbo, Italy's Governor-General of Libya, for toasting Stuck as the moral victor was understandable. A mood hardly improved one week later when he suffered the first crash of his career, a 150mph tumble from which he was lucky to escape.

It was during this unsettling period that Varzi began his rapid descent into morphine addiction. Already in discomfort from an appendectomy, physical bruising was now added to the mental anguish of Tripoli. His private life was in turmoil, too. He was having an affair

“Nuvolari missed all of his friends claimed by the sport, but admitted to missing Varzi the most”

with Ilse, the German wife of former Auto Union junior Paul Pietsch. This blonde *femme fatale* is said to have been his supplier. She was not, however, at Tripoli. But, for sure, squiring a divorcee made Varzi a pariah with the Roman Catholic Church.

His relationship with Auto Union soured, too. In June, he refused to drive its short-wheelbase car, created at his suggestion, at the Penya Rhin GP. Though still capable of fast laps and strong races – third and second at the Hungarian GP and Milan GP (scenes of more giant-killing by Nuvolari), plus third and second in the Coppa Acerbo and Swiss GP (wins for Rosemeyer) – his bosses became mistrustful. They found drug paraphernalia when secretly searching Varzi's Berne hotel room.

This previously model professional almost missed

the start of the Italian GP due to oversleeping, and quickly cooked his brakes before handing over to another reserve driver. He went to ground thereafter – spending time in a sanatorium, according to some – and would not race again until July 1937.

Based on this comeback victory in a minor voiturette race, some testing at the Nurburgring, and assurances that he had given up Ilse and morphine – likely he was galvanised by Nuvolari's debut for the team at August's Swiss GP – Varzi was re-signed on a race-by-race basis. At the second of these, the Czech GP, he arrived with fingers bandaged, and asked to be excused. He had a train to catch: to Vienna! Auto Union was done with him.

Nuvolari was also wounded, mourning his elder son, Giorgio, who had succumbed, aged 18, to myocarditis in June. Though essentially a loner like his rival, Nuvolari's drug of choice was speed, so he pressed on. Remaining with a reconstituted Alfa Corse, misguidedly hopeful of beating the German cars due to a change of GP formula, he called time after a car fire at the 1938 Pau GP hospitalised him.

By the middle of the season, he was back, driving for an Auto Union shorn of Rosemeyer, killed in a speed record attempt in January. As had Varzi, Nuvolari adapted quickly, and scored victories at the Italian and Donington Park GPs. He would also win the last major race before the Second World War, the 1939 Belgrade GP.

With the restoration of peace emerged a new Varzi – almost his old self, indeed – whereas Nuvolari appeared grey around the gills as well as the temples. It was obvious which of them would be handed a 158 Alfetta, the GP car to beat.

Varzi's schedule was spare. He knew his limits and parcelled his effort. Though outpaced by a younger team-mate, Jean-Pierre Wimille, he was impressive.

Nuvolari was busier, racing both to forget – his second son, Alberto, also 18, had died of nephritis in April 1946 – and because his compatriots demanded it. Epic performances in the Mille Miglia – second place in 1947 aboard a 1100cc Cisitalia; and a big lead lost to a Ferrari falling apart around him in 1948 – had Italy glued to its radio. Though these added to his legacy, they likely clipped years from him. Yet he would outlive Varzi.

At a Formula 2 race in Mantova in June 1948, held to commemorate Nuvolari's sons, the warhorses embraced before the start. The end was nigh. They knew it. Nuvolari led, but pulled in after eight laps, his lungs wracked by more than 20 years of inhaling muck and fumes. Varzi finished third in a Cisitalia, and drew on his post-race Lucky Strike more wistfully than ever.

Three weeks later, practising for the Swiss GP, Varzi lost control on a downhill ess slicked by rain, oil and sap. He fought the slide and scrubbed off speed before the Alfetta struck a bank. Pitched into a slow roll, the upper edge of its aero-screen struck him an unsurvivable blow.

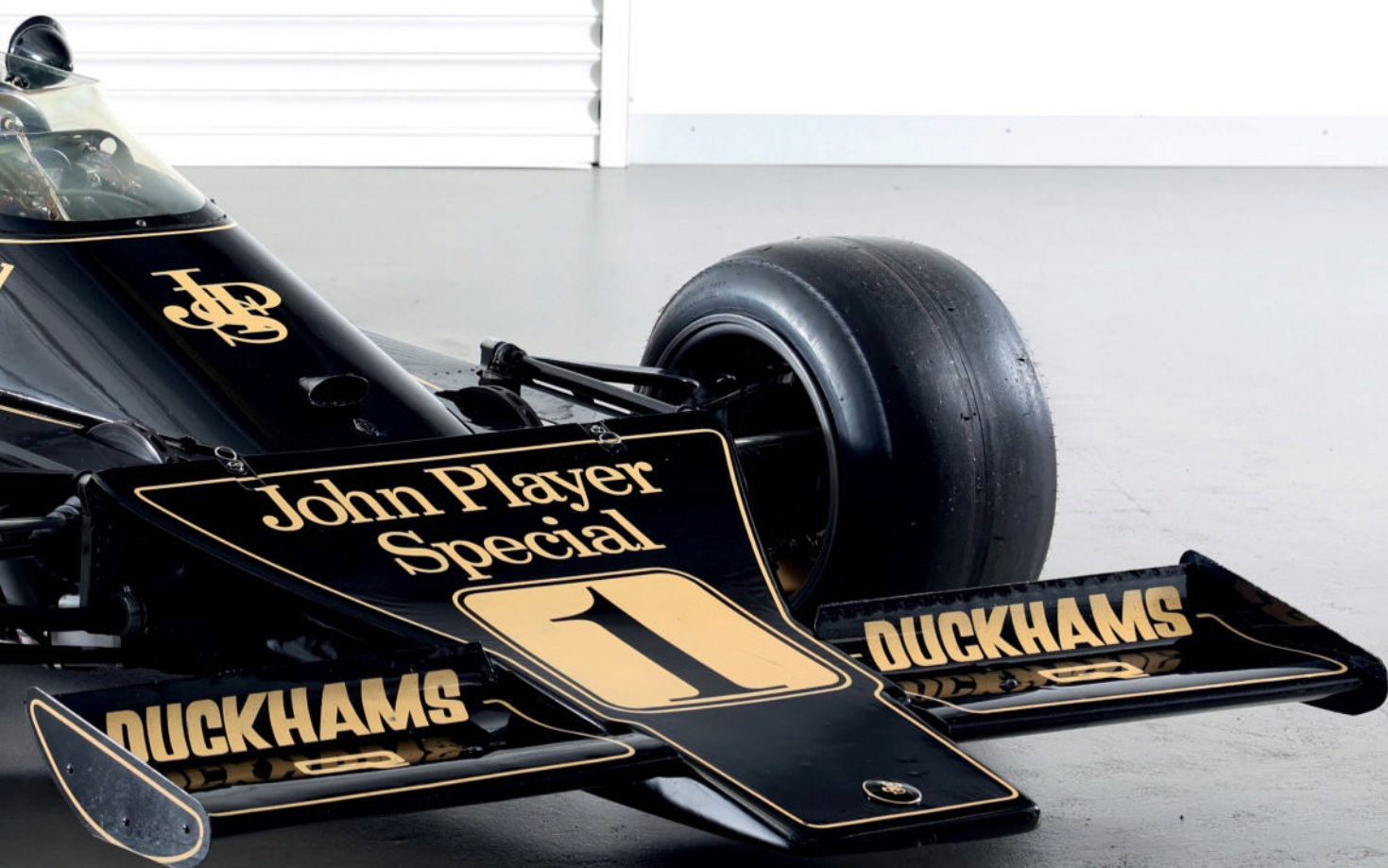
Nuvolari, who died in August 1953, aged (a very old) 60, missed all of his many friends claimed by the sport, but admitted to missing Varzi the most. Of the many achievements of the man who privately referred to Nuvolari as *Il Maestro*, the most notable was his having forced the greatest to be even greater. ✱



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LOTUS 76



The replacement for the fabled Lotus 72 served only briefly before being dropped in favour of its predecessor. It remains something of an enigma

GARY WATKINS

PHOTOGRAPHY JEP AND GETTY IMAGES

The 76 is the forgotten Lotus. A car that nestles somewhere between two greats in the pantheon of Team Lotus Formula 1 machinery, the ground-breaking types 72 and 78, doesn't have a chance of a look-in. Yet if it gets a rum

deal in the history books, it was probably also given one by the team over the course of 1974. A chassis that was meant to be a 72 for the modern age was dropped from frontline duty in the middle of the season and quietly forgotten at its end with nothing better than a fourth-placed finish to its name. Lotus opted not to persevere with what was in effect an updated 72, rather the old girl herself.

Lotus drivers Ronnie Peterson and Jacky Ickx would continue throughout 1975 with the car that had come on stream in 1970. Yet Team Lotus had long since realised that the original John Player Special was no longer quite as special as it had once been. Team boss Colin Chapman had decided in the middle of 1973 that it needed replacing with another Cosworth-engined machine. He turned to Ralph Bellamy, whose remit was to design a "tidied-up 72".

"The requirement for what turned out to be the 76 was to make a car just like the 72, but better engineered and more reliable," recalls ex-McLaren and Brabham man Bellamy, who'd joined the team in November 1972. "And that's what the car was."

Type 76 retained the torsion bar suspension and inboard brakes of its forebear, but it was stiffer, cheaper to make and easier to work on. The 72 was built around one of the last hand-rolled aluminium monocoques, whereas its successor utilised folded aluminium sheets. "The 72, like the M19 I worked on at McLaren, were among the last of the rolled-skin F1 cars," explains Bellamy. "They were handcrafted, which really compromised their construction."

The cooling system, at least in original form, was a departure: it helped facilitate a stiffer tub and a more serviceable racing car. "The monocoque on the 72 was tucked in a bit at the back because the radiators stood out at right angles," says Bellamy. "I decided I'd lay them back besides the engine. That meant we could have quite a wide monocoque at the rear –

LOTUS 76 NOW THAT WAS A CAR

being a bigger monocoque it was stiffer."

In turn, a wider monocoque at the rear allowed a neater fuel tank arrangement: on the 72 the bag tanks stretched forward of the dash bulkhead, which meant creating cut-outs for the front torsion bars that ran along the chassis. Suspension tweaks on the 72 were the bugbear of Team Lotus mechanics as a result. "Stuff like that was a nightmare on the 72," explains Bellamy. "It wasn't practical."

Yet as simple as the 76 was, a car that built on the strengths of what had gone before, it is largely remembered for two innovations, even if they were quickly discarded. The most obvious, as can be seen in the photographs of chassis #2, or JPS/10 as it was properly called, in its original aerodynamic configuration was the biplane rear wing. "It lasted for the press launch; that was about it," is how Bellamy remembers it. In fact, the novel rear aero treatment appeared on the car at two events before being replaced by a conventional wing straight off the 72.

"That bi-plane arrangement was just something I thought might work, and it looked like it might," explains Bellamy. "But you have to remember that we weren't all that flash at aerodynamics in those days."

Included in Chapman's design brief for the 76 was a semi-automatic clutch system that would allow its drivers to left-foot brake, something trialled on the 72 back in 1973. A button atop the gear lever triggered a starter motor: it ran in reverse to drive a hydraulic accumulator and activate the clutch. That allowed the driver to apply the brakes with his left foot if he so chose: the pedal was a v-shaped affair either side of the steering column. Again, it didn't last long.

There was another left-field development on the 76, one that came straight from Chapman's inventive mind. The design of the nose was inspired by his work on boats through JCL Marine, a so-called ACBC company (after his initials) and maker of the Moonraker and Marauder motor yachts.

"Colin gave me a lot of freedom in the design, but the nose was his contribution," says Bellamy. "If you look at the early photos, the nose doesn't appear to fit the rest of the car. He had this idea that came from boats, which he was very much into at the time. He called it the ventilated step. He thought that if it worked on the underside of a boat, it would work on the top of a racing car. That was Colin."

The trick nose and rear wing, as well as the electric clutch developed by Automotive Products, all disappeared in short order after the car made its debut at the third race of the 1974 season, the South African Grand Prix. The novel gearchange was more or less abandoned during the course of that Kyalami weekend in March. It proved troublesome from the get-go, though Peterson persevered with it through practice and qualifying.

The biggest issue, remembers Bellamy, was that it was conceived with no in-built bleed system. "Any hydraulic system needs to be bled and when we built a car up the system would be full of air, so the clutch wouldn't work properly," he explains. "The more you drove the car, the system kind of self-bled itself and eventually it would be half working. But remember in those days we were changing a Cossie every 600 miles or whatever. So the air would get in again and we'd never do any proper testing with it."

Peterson could only qualify 16th, Ickx managing 10th. Worse was to come when the two Lotus drivers contrived >>



Bellamy was tasked by Chapman to build a "tidied-up 72"

PHIPPS/SUTTON IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES



“THE REQUIREMENT FOR WHAT TURNED OUT TO BE THE 76 WAS TO MAKE A CAR JUST LIKE THE 72, BUT BETTER ENGINEERED AND MORE RELIABLE”



The 76 (right) made its debut at round three of the season in South Africa

LAT IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES



Rain in Spain, and Chapman's use of tank tape, set downward spiral

PHIPPS/SUTTON IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES; LAT IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES



Team fell back on 76 spare car, with 72 rear end grafted on, for Peterson at the Nurburgring



Peterson's 76 proves a bit of a handful before its retirement from the Belgian Grand Prix

LAT IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES

to collide at the first corner on the opening lap, Peterson retiring as a result after two laps, Ickx going out with brake issues after 31. It was an inauspicious debut for the new car. Yet it was the events of its second world championship outing at Jarama in Spain two weeks later that did for the 76.

The unusual rear aero set-up, used in South Africa and again when a single car was entered for Peterson at the non-championship International Trophy at Silverstone a week later, had gone, and so too had the semi-auto gearchange. Peterson qualified on the front row at the Madrid venue and led the opening exchanges of a race that started in wet conditions, just as he had done at Silverstone, also from second on the grid in the dry.

But it was the rain, or rather Chapman's reaction to it, that hit the reputation of the Lotus 76. After the reconnaissance laps, Chapman spotted that the oil temperatures were low on the two Lotuses. The reason, explains Bellamy, was that the oil coolers (hung out the back as per the 72) were being doused in rain water by the rear tyres, but his boss insisted that tape needed to be applied to the coolers to bring up the temps. In fact, he did it himself. "The mechanics always took some tank tape up onto the grid," recalls Bellamy. "He said, 'Give me that', and he put the tank tape around the oil rads. Off they go, the track dries and, lo and behold, both cars experience overheating."

Peterson would retire when his Cosworth DFV expired, two and a half laps after a chaotic tyre change for slicks had dropped him down the order. Ickx, who'd been running fourth from fifth on the grid before the pitstops, also encountered overheating problems, though he'd go out with braking issues again.

After one more race, the Belgian GP at Nivelles in May, Lotus team manager Peter Warr announced that it would be reverting to the 72 for the Monaco GP in May, though a 76 was present as a spare and used in practice by Ickx.

"Before Monaco, Peter Warr said, 'These cars are no good, we are going to take the 72 to Monte Carlo' and told me that I had to redesign the cooling system," says Bellamy. "One of the criticisms of the car was that it overheated, and that was down to Colin and the tape."

A cooling issue, perceived or otherwise, was only one of the crosses on which the 76 was crucified: its weight and a tendency to understeer were the others. Part of Chapman's design brief was a reduction in weight from the old car to the new of 100lb (45kg). Geoff Aldridge, who drew the 76 under Bellamy's direction, reckons that was typical Chapman: "It was the Old Man's way of giving people targets even if they could never hit them."

Bellamy insists that the 76 wasn't overweight. "It was deemed to be heavier, which it was with the electric clutch on it, but it wasn't heavier per se," he explains. "When [engineer] Nigel Bennett came to join us the following year, a 76 was sitting there in one of the bays. He asked what was wrong with the car. I told him, 'Oh mate, don't go there.' He got the boys to roll the car onto the scales, and it was no heavier than a 72."

Bellamy doesn't disagree that the 76 understeered, but he points out that so did the 72. Lotus had claimed the drivers' titles in 1970 and 1972 with Jochen Rindt and Emerson Fittipaldi respectively on Firestone tyres, but with a switch to Goodyears for 1973 it had gradually dropped down the

LOTUS 76 NOW THAT WAS A CAR

development pecking order, constructors' title that year or no. The new car's late arrival in mid-February after the first two grands prix and the defection of Fittipaldi to McLaren only hastened the problem – and the Team Lotus slide.

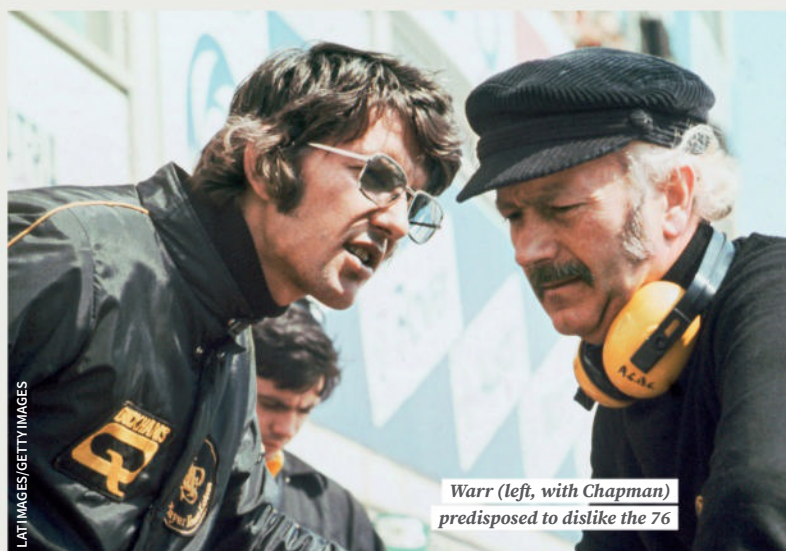
"Goodyear did much of their winter testing with McLaren and Emerson, and came up with a tyre that suited the M23," explains Bellamy. "It was a more robust tyre. That didn't work for Lotus with the inboard front brakes and low unsprung weight. We couldn't get any heat into the tyres because we didn't have the brake disc inside the wheel."

A trio of wins for Peterson with the 72 over the course of 1974 would suggest that the decision to change tack was the correct one. But Bellamy argues that the old car was no better – "no worse" are actually the words he uses – than the new. Peterson won first time out at Monaco after the decision to go back to the previous car, a victory Bellamy puts down to SuperSwede's mercurial talents: "That was just sheer driving skill, and being a slow track, he could hurl the car around and overcome the front tyre issue."

Peterson loved the 72, or at least his ideal of what the car should be. As Team Lotus laboured through the following year with the car, eventually in what was known as F-spec, he asked during testing at Paul Ricard for it to be put back to the configuration in which he had raced it to four grand prix victories in 1973. "He said that was the best it had ever been," remembers Lotus mechanic Ian Dawson. "I seem to remember him saying it felt much better, but he ended up going slower."

Peterson's passion for the 72 was matched by Warr's love for Peterson. The bond he formed with his new driver in 1973 has to be implicated in Fittipaldi's departure to McLaren for 1974. If Peterson was lobbying for the return of his baby, he would certainly have got the support of the team manager.

Warr took against the 76, perhaps with Peterson whispering in his ear or perhaps because he resented Bellamy. The designer of the 76 claims Warr was against the car from the start: "He didn't want to have anything to do with the 76. Until I arrived the only pathway to Colin was through him; that changed when I got there because Colin and I got on well." Aldridge backs up the idea that ➤



Warr (left, with Chapman)
predisposed to dislike the 76



“IT WAS NEVER IN FAVOUR AND PROBABLY WASN’T GIVEN A FAIR CHANCE”

it was the victim of intra-team politics: “I think the car was never really in favour. I suspect it probably wasn’t given a fair chance.”

Warr didn’t go into detail about the 76 in his autobiography, *Team Lotus: My view from the pit wall*, published two years after his death in 2010. Instead he reserved more space for a not entirely complimentary commentary on Bellamy’s talents. A man who once said that Nigel Mansell would never win a grand prix “so long as I have a hole in my arse” during the Brit’s stint at Team Lotus was in private equally blunt in his assessment of Bellamy’s talents. “The only thing he can draw is his salary,” he told one Lotus employee.

The career of the 76 didn’t end with Peterson’s summer victories aboard the 72, first at Monaco in May and then at the French GP at Dijon in July. A car was present as a spare up until the Nurburgring in August. It had to be pressed into service after Peterson shunted his 72 in practice on the Nordschleife, the rear end of his crashed car grafted onto the 76, now with a blunter nose and the longer sidepods of the revised cooling system. With this bitza machine Peterson notched up the best result for the 76: a fourth position for JPS/10, over a minute behind race winner Clay Regazzoni’s Ferrari.

After some decent summer testing, Lotus took two 76s to Monza in September, and a 72 as the spare this time. Peterson, however, decided to go back to his much-loved mount after practice. On the eve of the race, he opted to ditch the wide-track rear suspension that had come on stream in France and went on to take his third victory of the season.

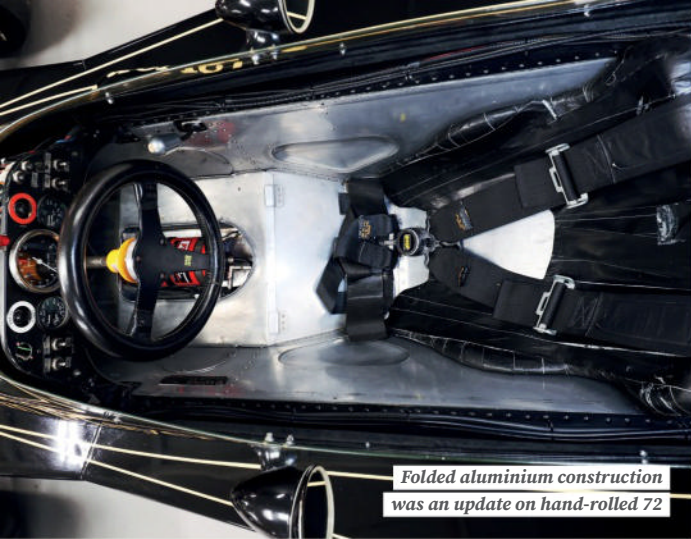
Ickx would race JPS/10 in the same half-and-half form in Austria and Italy, before Tim Schenken drove the other car at Watkins Glen as a third Team Lotus entry at the season-closing United States Grand Prix in October.

And that was that for the 76. But its legacy stretched on. In the summer of 1975, Chapman, stung by his team’s fading fortunes, decided it was time to rethink the modern F1 car. He came back from a break at his villa in Ibiza with a document handwritten on one of his favoured Oxford feint-ruled notepads outlining the questions that needed to be asked.

The catalyst for the document appears to have been what had quickly turned into a working lunch with Bellamy, whose family had a property nearby in Ibiza. It led to the establishment of a think-tank at Ketteringham Hall, still a year away from becoming Team Lotus HQ, with Bellamy joined by ex-BRM men Peter Wright and Tony Rudd, who were recruited from elsewhere in the Chapman empire. The result was the ground-effect aerodynamics with which Lotus would return to the forefront of grand prix racing with the type 78 and then the title-winning 79.

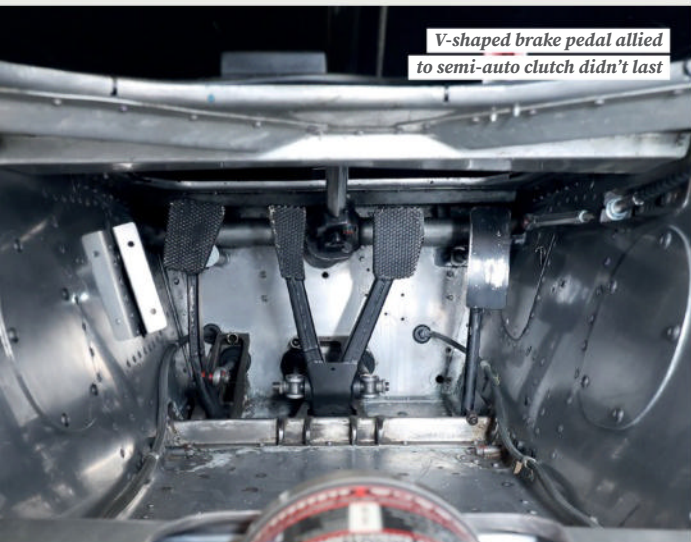
The 76 was in no way the father of the 78, but it helped set the wheels in motion for the next Lotus breakout innovation that Chapman was forever seeking. That makes it an important staging post in the history of the team. Had Lotus successfully replaced the 72, would Chapman’s frustrations have manifested themselves in that document in his ultra-neat hand? That is a question that can never be answered. There’s also another one in the same category. Just how good, or bad, was the Lotus 76? ❧

LOTUS 76
NOW
THAT
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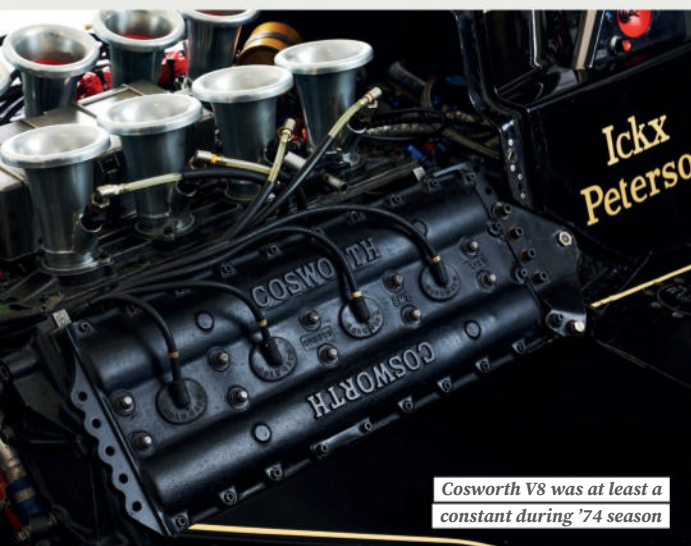
Folded aluminium construction was an update on hand-rolled 72

JEP



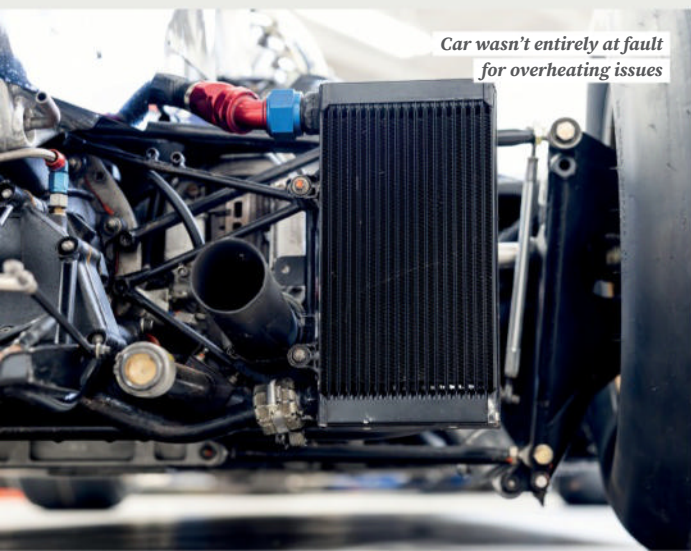
V-shaped brake pedal allied to semi-auto clutch didn't last

JEP



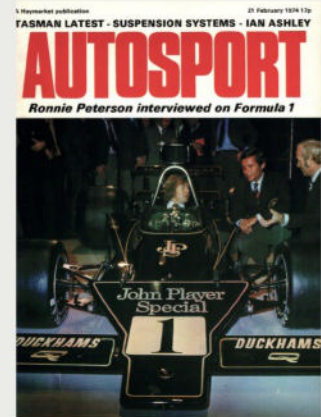
Cosworth V8 was at least a constant during '74 season

JEP



Car wasn't entirely at fault for overheating issues

JEP



RACE RECORD

Year	1974
Races	8 (including 1 non-championship)
Wins	0
Pole positions	0
Fastest laps	0
Key drivers	Ronnie Peterson Jacky Ickx Tim Schenken

SPECIFICATION

Chassis	folded aluminium monocoque
Front suspension	double wishbone, inboard dampers, pull-rod activated torsion bars. Inboard brakes
Rear suspension	twin parallel links, outboard dampers, pull-rod activated torsion bars. Inboard brakes
Engine	Ford Cosworth DFV V8
Engine capacity	2993cc
Power	450bhp
Transmission	Hewland FG400 five-speed
Tyres	Goodyear
Weight	580kg

MAURICE HAMILTON'S

ALTERNATIVE VIEW

Racing rules have simply got too much, as the Italian Grand Prix showed

You could forgive Ollie Bearman for feeling miffed at Monza thanks to the stewards slapping a 10-second penalty on his race time and two penalty points onto his licence. Trouble had arisen on lap 40 when the Williams of Carlos Sainz got alongside and edged marginally ahead of Bearman, the two then colliding as Sainz, on the outside, turned in as normal to the second chicane.

The stewards said the Haas driver was at fault because he had 'defended his position and, instead of giving up the position, had caused the collision'. The crucial bit, when you got down to the letter of a finicky directive, was a failure by Bearman to have the front axle of his Haas ahead of the similar axle on the Williams. It's a daft rule – in this instance.

That's the point, of course. Each episode is different because motor racing is such a fluid sport. F1 drivers are surely big enough and bold enough to work things out for themselves and apply common sense. Instead of that, we have Sainz hitting the brakes at close to 200mph while, at the same time, mentally flicking through several pages of guidelines about what may or may not be permitted to happen next. In this instance, his antennae will have seized upon the line about 'my front axle is ahead of yours'. Whereupon he turned in – and triggered more than a clash of wheels.

There were a few points at issue. One: according to the stewards, the guideline had suddenly become the law. Two: how on Earth can a driver see anything on either side thanks to the cockpit protection? And three: like it or not, the Haas was right there. Where was Bearman supposed to go? He had actually braked earlier than Sainz – probably after his filing system triggered a cerebral klaxon, not so much about a possible front axle transgression but more as a warning about never knowing what the stewards might say next.

This may be small consolation to Ollie, but it might have been worse. The officials could have checked out his appearance in the manner of a troop inspection in the barracks. Twenty-seven years ago in Brazil, Jacques Villeneuve was incensed when the Chief Steward took the Williams driver aside and suggested he tidy himself up and get his hair cut. I'm not joking. This sartorial policing at least brought some unintentional levity to an earlier official outburst noted only for its supreme silliness.

This was at the time of the infamous 'fiddle brake'. McLaren had cleverly installed a brake-steer system which,

through a second brake pedal, allowed the driver to operate either the right or the left rear brake and improve the car's turn-in and stability through a corner. The game was up when ace photographer Darren Heath, having noticed the rear discs glowing unexpectedly, had seized the moment and captured the three-pedal arrangement by sticking his camera into the cockpit of Mika Hakkinen's MP4/12 abandoned by the trackside towards the end of the previous year.

Having previously assured McLaren that the system was legal, it was one thing for the FIA to, as it were, brake with the other foot and shout 'foul' (the system being banned early in 1998, after McLaren had kicked off the year with domination); quite another to issue a press release admonishing the motorsport world for using the term 'fiddle brake'. This expression has been common parlance since Bernie Ecclestone was a boy. It's a layman's way of describing, in simple terms, the McLaren system by comparing it with the fiddle brake on a trials car. The FIA, however, had – and I quote Brazilian Grand Prix Bulletin #22 – "great unhappiness" about this because it implied "surreptitious activity and must be avoided in the future". The statement just fell short of saying that anyone caught uttering the phrase would also be checked for cleanliness behind the ears and have their fingernails inspected.

In this historic context, Bearman needs to watch his language. In the post-race press release at Monza, he said: "I really had to fight as we were slow in the straights." I mean, that could cause 'great unhappiness' as it suggests pugilistic intention as well as surreptitious activity by deliberately driving at a reduced pace.

Of course, none of this would matter if the drivers were allowed to get on with what comes naturally, sort out their differences afterwards and not resort to whinging on the radio while quoting passages from the F1 version of the Highway Code. It never used to be like this. At Zandvoort

"None of this would matter if the drivers were allowed to get on with what comes naturally"

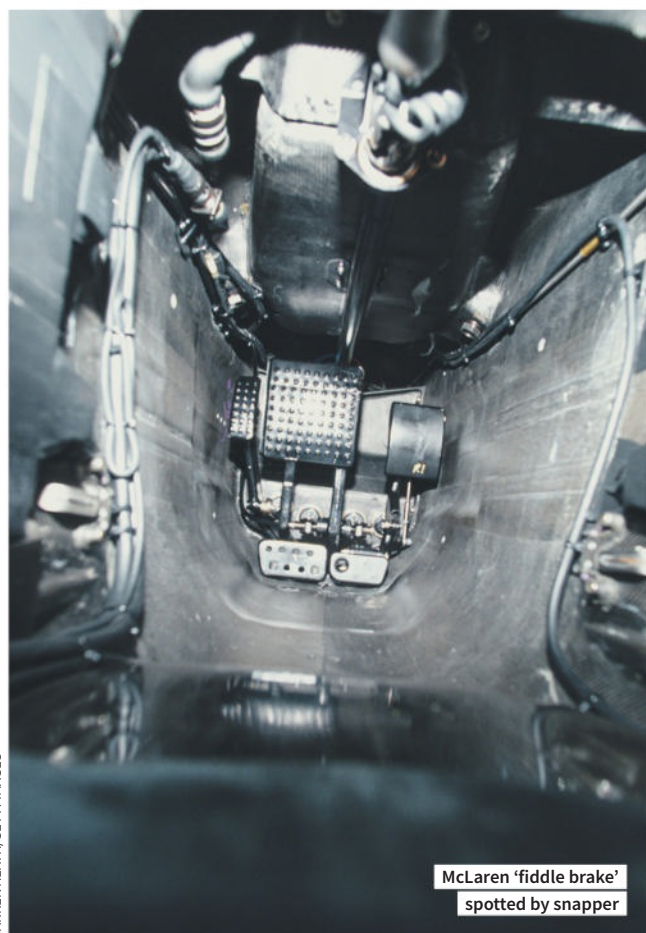
in 1977, James Hunt collided with Mario Andretti as the McLaren driver ran Andretti's Lotus wide at the exit of Tarzan. The subsequent dialogue between the two was salty – to say the least. But that was it. No stewards' enquiry. No reruns of the television transmission to determine if one specific part of a car was fractionally ahead of the other in some ridiculous geometric case study.

I'd love to have been a fly on the wall if an official had attempted to tell either driver that he was penalised for being 'predominantly at fault' (as the stewards claimed with Bearman). That's a bit like saying you're a very naughty boy for daring to go racing. 'Great unhappiness' wouldn't make a start on how either Mario or James would have reacted to the introduction of pedantic rules in a sport that has – or ought to have – calculated risk at its core. ✽



Bearman got his knuckles rapped over Sainz clash

PORTLOCK/GETTY IMAGES



McLaren 'fiddle brake' spotted by snapper

DARREN HEATH/GETTY IMAGES



Villeneuve advised to smarten himself up

SUTTON IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES



Hunt and Andretti sorted Dutch GP shunt between themselves

McKLEIN



MCKLEIN

WHICH F1 DRIVER SHOULD COMPETE IN ANOTHER CATEGORY AND WHERE?

Max Verstappen's GT3 exploits have grabbed people's attention, so what other extra-curricular outings could the current F1 crop try?



VERSTAPPEN IN THE WRC STUART CODLING

With due apologies to the legions of gravel fans out there, what the rally world needs right now is a driver with massive talent, commitment and work ethic... but considerably younger than

Sebastien Ogier. Let's face it, the fact that 41-year-old Seb recently took the lead of the 2025 World Rally Championship, despite running a part-time campaign, is a telling indictment.

Yes, Kimi Raikkonen didn't exactly move the dial during his WRC 'holiday' in 2010-11. Trundling in towards the back end of the top 10 – or even outside – wasn't quite what either the Kimster, his fans, or the WRC promoter wanted.

But his problem wasn't want of talent, it was – close your ears, Raikkonen cultists – lack of work ethic and a failure to grasp that rallying means getting up early in the morning. His co-driver used to have to keep a stock of energy bars in the cockpit to keep Kimi awake.

What Max Verstappen would bring isn't just a superbly reactive talent at the wheel, and a spectacular driving style, he would boss the boring-but-necessary stuff that is what separates the greats from the merely goods. He'd do his due diligence on the recce – probably wouldn't even need a co-driver.

And perhaps that would be for the best – because, as we know, Verstappen has a bit of a short fuse. As a WRC pilot he would follow Francois Delecour in the grand tradition of greeting imperfect pacenote recitation with a tongue-lashing, but would he go as far as Gigi Galli and throw punches? It would be fascinating to see...



LECLERC TO LE MANS KEVIN TURNER

Charles Leclerc's love for Ferrari is clear elsewhere in this issue and the marque has a ready-made frontrunner in the World Endurance Championship. The 499P Hypercar has won the last three

Le Mans 24 Hours and, given Leclerc's frustrations with the Italian team's Formula 1 machinery, it could be a good boost for everyone to have a successful foray to the Circuit de la Sarthe. Sportscar racing is growing in stature again at the moment, with several ex-F1 drivers part of the many manufacturer-backed programmes, and Leclerc has hinted at his enthusiasm before, so it all adds up.

There's a stupid clash between the Canadian Grand Prix and Le Mans next year (why, why?!), so perhaps this is one for the future. Or maybe, if things aren't looking good for Ferrari in the first year of the new F1 regulations, Leclerc and Lewis Hamilton might quite like the idea of being somewhere else come the middle of June...

Aside from winning an F1 title for Ferrari – and perhaps the Italian GP, which Leclerc has already done – it doesn't get much better than winning Le Mans. Leclerc has long since shown that he has got on top of the tyre preservation and relentless race pace that are crucial in the WEC, and he's already proved himself to be a good team player. Plus, who wouldn't want to see the eight-time GP winner really on it during qualifying around the high-speed 8.5-mile circuit?



RUSSELL IN INDYCAR MARCUS SIMMONS

Long before his F1 career, George Russell did a very special thing. Darkness was not far away on a late Friday afternoon in Macau; there were even some spits of rain. Yet the then-18-year-old reeled off two laps

in his Hitech GP Dallara-Mercedes quicker than the best anyone else managed to secure pole position for the Macau Grand Prix. Not only that, but he completed the sinuous mountain sector almost half a second faster than anyone had ever managed before in that era of F3.

Russell's skill in threading his car so exquisitely across that sector suggests he would take to IndyCar's street tracks like a duck to water. Similarly, the finesse required through the two kinks at the start of the Guia Circuit's lap lends itself naturally to oval racing. And, as we've seen in the years since in F1, he's a natural on road courses too.

Russell is ferociously intelligent out of the cockpit, and his comfort in taking on cerebral challenges is ideal for the strategy required for IndyCar success. 'Can you eke out a couple more laps on the fuel? Can you make these tyres last?' No problem. Here is potentially the natural successor to Scott Dixon – once his F1 career is over, of course.

Things didn't go quite so well for Russell in Macau in the races. Hitech found its cars lacking in straightline speed, and he fell down the order to finish seventh. But he did a lot better with that team than would a certain Spaniard named Alex Palou in 2018.



ALONSO IN THE BTCC JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

Outside of F1, Fernando Alonso has driven in the Indianapolis 500, the Le Mans 24 Hours, the Daytona 24 Hours and the Dakar Rally. There really isn't much that the veteran Spaniard hasn't

done across his 25-plus years in racing, although there's one arena that comes to mind that he's yet to become ensconced within.

Here's the premise: Nigel Mansell left F1 to race Indycars, with considerable success when he won the 1993 title in a Newman-Haas Lola. When 1994 wasn't going quite so well, Mansell returned to F1 with Williams to seat-swap with David Coulthard after Ayrton Senna's death, departed again part-way through 1995 after that disastrous McLaren stint, and then ended up in the British Touring Car Championship in 1998 – also with limited success (*though everyone remembers Donington Park in the wet!* – ed).

If Alonso wants to consider himself as one of the great multi-discipline racers of his time (he already is, but let's stick with the jesting nature of this hypothetical) then he's got to prove himself in tin-tops. It's the sort of lift the BTCC needs: someone with a massive profile to draw huge crowds, trade paint with Ash Sutton and Tom Ingram at Croft, and complain that his hatchback wasn't given the requisite space at Clervaux. Yes, Alonso's reputation would paint a colossal target on his back, but he'd surely relish getting stuck in on proper circuits with his brand of sarcasm and swashbuckling antics. Let's hope that Jason Plato has the two-time champion's number...



Ferrari has a fine history with F1 drivers racing its cars at Le Mans. Should Leclerc be next?

NANCHINO/EURASIA SPORT IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES



MARCEL VAN DORST/EVERETT IMAGES/NURPHOTO



ISACK HADJAR

*The Racing Bulls F1 rookie on judo,
Japan, and why Liam Lawson is
wrong about who knows **Cars** best*

OLEG KARPOV

PHOTOGRAPHY GETTY IMAGES

JAPAN



MARK SUTTON/SUTTON IMAGES

I've been to Japan five or six times already – not just for racing, but on holiday too. I love everything about it: the food, the culture, the people. I grew up watching *Dragon Ball*, so it was always Japan, Japan... I've even made a few Japanese friends, just meeting people randomly. It's hard to communicate sometimes, but that's part of the charm!

JUDO

Judo was actually my first sport – my dad put me into it when I was four years old. I had no idea what was going on, just suddenly found myself on a mat fighting other kids! But I always loved it. I did it for 10 years, and I still try to practise whenever I'm in Paris. I come back sore, but I still love it. It was my first passion before racing took over. But when I stepped into a go-kart, I knew almost immediately that I needed to put judo aside.

MMA AND BOXING



COOPER NEILL/ZUFFALC

I've always loved boxing – I used to watch *Rocky* as a kid, and that kind of stuck with me. Mixed martial arts came later, but I'm really into both now. Alexander Volkanovski is my favourite fighter – and I actually met him in Melbourne last year. He was Daniel Ricciardo's guest in the garage, and we hit it off quickly. We're still in touch, which is kind of surreal – because I was a fan before, and now we're friends.

CARS



PATRICK WYMORE/DISNEY PARKS

Cars is the best movie ever made. Liam Lawson and I are both obsessed with it – but he thinks it's a competition. He claims he can recite every line, but that's just not true. We watched a clip recently and he got one wrong. And I got it right – which just shows you who the bigger fan is.

BREAKING BAD

I think it's a masterpiece. I've watched it twice, with a two-year gap in between. I was hoping I'd forget – but I still knew what was going to happen, so it wasn't as good as watching it the first time. I wish I could just erase that part of my memory to experience it again. Now I'm going to wait 10 years – and try again. What I love about it is how smart the story is – it shows that if you've got a good brain, you can make anything happen, even in a world you know nothing about.

PHYSICS



CAREZZEVOLI

My dad is a physicist. And I love physics too. I have to! Growing up, I had stickers with formulas all over my helmet. I brought that back in Formula 1 – you can still see some on my lid. It's the basics: Newton's laws, Bernoulli's equation... but once it gets into quantum stuff, I'm completely lost. Still, it's fascinating – even if I'm not gifted like my dad is.

PSG



BADREDDINE/DEFOOD IMAGES

Paris Saint-Germain is my team. Both my primary and high schools were near the stadium, so I've always been around it. I've seen the tough times, and I never thought we'd win the Champions League. But now that we have, I think it'll just keep coming. Favourite moment? Beating Barcelona 4-0 in 2017. But let's not talk about the second leg...

CATS

I have two cats. I just love their character – they're independent, smart and hilarious. We've got dogs too, but cats are just so funny. I'm definitely a cat person.



RADECKA/NURPHOTO

RACLETTE

My favourite one-off meal. Only in winter, and always around Christmas. Raclette is the best. It's comfort food, and you can put whatever you want on it. Nothing beats it.



NEWELL/CAMERASPORT

GRAND SLAM FINALS

I'm not a huge tennis fan – but I love watching Grand Slam finals. The rivalries are always the same – like Alcaraz vs Sinner – and the level is insane. I love that kind of one-on-one battle, where it's just pure focus and talent on display.

SINGLE SEATERS





Lindblad's Baku comeback

Here with the Azerbaijan capital's striking Flame Towers providing a dramatic backdrop, Red Bull junior and Campos Racing Formula 2 driver Arvid Lindblad looks to find his feet during free practice. Alas, qualifying was "such a mess that we weren't really able to get a lap at all", according to the 18-year-old Briton, and a penalty from the previous round at Monza meant he lined up at the back of the field for the sprint race. But he fought back to take the flag in 10th, then followed that up in the feature by finishing in sixth place from 14th on the grid. "I'm happy with how we turned it around," he concluded.

Photographer James Sutton/
Formula 1/Formula Motorsport
Limited/Getty Images

Where Baku, Azerbaijan

When Friday 19 September 2025

Details Nikon D5
85mm, 1/5000th @ F1.8



Browning won at Monza, while Lindblad took out Stanek. Inset: Dunne looks set for Red Bull

FORMULA 2

BROWNING AND CRAWFORD ON TOP

While the quest for the Formula 2 title continued to take twists and turns through September at Monza and Baku, the question marks over the composition of the 2026 grid almost matched the on-track stuff for intrigue.

The big news is that Colton Herta's move across the Atlantic from IndyCar to become test driver for the new Cadillac Formula 1 team will also involve him competing in F2 next season. Herta needs superlicence points (see p51), while Cadillac CEO Dan Towriss explained that the Californian also needs to avoid the pitfalls to have hit other IndyCar-turned-F1 drivers.

"The entitlement model from the US hasn't worked out that well in the past, so we really want to build that body of work, the knowledge that's necessary, to see if he has what it takes to drive in Formula 1," said Towriss.

No team has yet been named, and the same goes for recently crowned Formula 3 champion Rafael Camara.

The Azerbaijan weekend provided a slight hitch for points

leader Leonardo Farnaroli. The Italian was at the head of the feature race in his Invicta Racing car when a safety car prompted all the leading runners to make their mandatory tyre stops. But Farnaroli got hemmed into his pitbox while the queue of traffic trundled down pitlane, dropping him to fourth. He then got into a fight with Alex Dunne that ended when Farnaroli inadvertently punted the Irishman down the escape road at Turn 1.

Up front, DAMS-run Aston Martin F1 protege Jak Crawford soaked up a late charge from Joshua Durksen for victory to move him to 19 points off Farnaroli, whose third place on the road was converted to fifth by a 10-second penalty for the incident with Dunne, for whom a second off spelled retirement.

Dunne is now almost out of the title picture, but is also the subject of conjecture. He has parted ways with the McLaren junior programme and, as we went to press, seemed certain to move to the Red Bull stable – his feisty style of racing certainly

fits the bill there...

Third in points is Luke Browning, who finally scored his maiden F2 win with Hitech GP in a wild-and-woolly feature race at Monza. Browning lost out in an early battle with Oliver Goethe, who pitted early and was then totally undone by a safety car.

That promoted Browning – who joined the hordes in pitting under caution – to the front, although he lost out to the AIX Racing car of Durksen during one of the mid-race restarts. Soon Williams protege Browning was back in front, pulling away from the Paraguayan to take the win.

Red Bull junior Arvid Lindblad triggered the first two safety cars: the first when he accidentally hit Dunne, who himself was lining up a move on Durksen, into the wall at the Ascari chicane. Remarkably, his Campos Racing team did not see fit to replace Lindblad's tattered front wing when he pitted for tyres under the safety car, resulting in him wiping out Roman Stanek at the restart – and narrowly missing the car of Browning.



EBREY/LAT/GETTY IMAGES



SCHUMACHER MAKES INDYCAR TEST DEBUT

Is Mick Schumacher moving to the IndyCar Series? That could be on the cards, with the ex-Formula 1 racer and current Alpine World Endurance Championship contender making his test debut.

Schumacher was set to run at the Indianapolis road course on 13 October with Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing. "It's no secret that I am a big fan of single-seater racing, so this first IndyCar test will be an experience to treasure, and I am very much looking forward to driving a car where I can see my wheels," said the German, whose last single-seater race was the 2022 Abu Dhabi Grand Prix with Haas.

Other IndyCar aspirants were in action during the recent rookie test at Mid-Ohio. Indy NXT champ Dennis Hauger's deal to step up with Dale Coyne Racing has already been confirmed, which is just as well because the Norwegian blotted his copybook with a shunt at the start of the day. NXT runner-up Caio Collet was also in action, the Brazilian getting a run with AJ Foyt Racing.

Highly rated Japanese Kakunoshin Ohta, who is third in Super Formula and has dovetailed that with enduro outings in the Meyer Shank Racing Acura in IMSA's GTP class, drove for that team's IndyCar operation in the test. The 26-year-old Honda contractee is keen to compete in the series.



De Palo leads Slater. They'll be team-mates in 2026

SLATER STEPS UP FULL-TIME TO F3

With six days of post-season October testing kicking off at Jerez on 7-8 October, it's no wonder that much of the Formula 3 grid for 2026 has already been confirmed. As we went to press, it stood at 24 out of the 30 seats!

British golden boy Freddie

Slater, who is neck-and-neck for the Formula Regional European title with Matteo De Palo, will have to get used to the Italian because they are going to be team-mates. De Palo remains at Trident, with Slater transferring from Prema Racing for his step up. Trident has run each of the past three champions, and retains rapid Dane Noah

Stromstedt in the other seat.

Newly crowned British Formula 4 champion Fionn McLaughlin is making the big step to F3. The Irish talent remains with Hitech GP, alongside Toyota protege Jin Nakamura and Michael Shin.

The other British team, Rodin Motorsport, will field Pedro Clerot, Michael Ho and Brando Badoer.



Barnard was a star rookie at McLaren

BARNARD JOINS DS PENSKE

Taylor Barnard's move to DS Penske for the forthcoming Formula E season has finally been confirmed. The 21-year-old East Anglian will line up alongside amiable Austro-Bavarian Maximilian Guenther after his old team McLaren's pull-out.

Barnard replaces Jean-Eric

Vergne, who has moved over to the now Citroen-branded Stellantis line-up alongside fellow big hitter Nick Cassidy.

"He [Barnard] has already demonstrated remarkable speed, composure, and racecraft, rewriting the record books and establishing himself as the most successful rookie in FE history," said DS Penske chief Jay Penske.

That's not the only intrigue

in the world of electric racing. Felipe Drugovich, the 2022 Formula 2 champion, joins Jake Dennis at Andretti in place of Nico Muller, who is likely to step up to the factory Porsche line-up.

Joel Eriksson, the Swede who ran Lando Norris close for the 2017 European F3 title, gets his chance at Envision Racing alongside veteran Sebastien Buemi.

RACE WINNERS 6 September - 5 October

FORMULA 2

Monza 6-7 September

Race 1 Leonardo Fornaroli (Invicta Racing)

Race 2 Luke Browning (Hitech GP)

Baku 20-21 September

Race 1 Dino Beganovic (Hitech GP)

Race 2 Jak Crawford (DAMS)

POINTS 1 Fornaroli 188; 2 Crawford 169; 3 Browning 161.

FORMULA 3

Monza 6-7 September

Race 1 Roman Bilinski (below) (Rodin Motorsport)

Race 2 Tasanapol Inthraphuvasak (Campos Racing)

POINTS 1 Rafael Camara 166; 2 Nikola Tsolov 124; 3 Mari Boya 116.

FORMULA REGIONAL EUROPEAN

Red Bull Ring 6-7 September

Race 1 Matteo De Palo (Trident)

Race 2 Pedro Clerot (Van Amersfoort Racing)

Barcelona 20-21 September

Race 1 Matteo De Palo (Trident)

Race 2 Enzo Deligny (R-ace GP)

Hockenheim 4-5 October

Race 1 Freddie Slater (Prema Racing)

Race 2 Enzo Deligny (R-ace GP)

POINTS 1 Slater 263; 2 De Palo 259; 3 Deligny 233.

F1 ACADEMY

Marina Bay 4-5 October

Race 1 Lia Block (ART Grand Prix)

Race 2 Maya Weug (MP Motorsport)

POINTS 1 Doriane Pin 151; 2 Weug 142; 3 Ella Lloyd 101.



ILLMAN/GETTY IMAGES



Super Formula-derived machines can hit 186mph

A2RL SEASON TWO BRINGS AUTONOMOUS RACING BACK TO ABU DHABI

The Abu Dhabi Autonomous Racing League, A2RL, is back for a second season, promising more cars and more advanced technology in a race like no other.

This year, 11 teams will field EAV-25 Super Formula-derived cars packed with cutting-edge tech around the Yas Marina Circuit, their goal to create a vehicle that can race competitively without a person behind the 'wheel', instead relying on sensors, LiDAR, and the sort of tech you expect from a Marvel movie.

The 2025 round of A2RL, now part of the inaugural Abu Dhabi Autonomous Week – in which visitors to Yas Marina can experience a wide variety of autonomous robotics events, as well as a packed off-track schedule of music and other activities – is pushing boundaries, says Stephane Timpano, CEO of A2RL organiser

ASPIRE: "Our teams have trained far longer than they did for the first race, and our team from Japan, TGM Grand Prix, is an established Super Formula race team, so they're looking at it as a race, not as a science experiment."

This year's EAV-25 is a beefed-up take on the first A2RL racer, with enhanced hardware and software capabilities for greater control, as well as improvements to make the cars more capable and reliable on track. Powered by a 2.0-litre turbocharged Honda engine, the EVA-25 can hit speeds up to 186mph.

And this time round, the teams have been able to hone their skills in the virtual world using A2RL SIM-Sprint, a four-stage virtual competition, which also has a real-world use, adds Timpano: "Virtual simulators are very relevant in the preparation of the future of mobility."

The first season gave teams just three months to prepare; with virtual testing, they have far more data to work with. "It gives the AI pilots and the teams a lot of training," says Timpano, "so we expect that to reflect in the way they operate. This has been really about preparation and coaching of the teams to

help them perform better."

Where last year eight teams competed to race in a four-car final round, now 11 teams are aiming to be one of six cars racing for the top spot and a \$2.25 million prize pot. As well as the main event, Man vs Machine also returns. Last year an A2RL car raced against ex-F1 ace Daniil Kvyat, who crossed the line 10 seconds ahead of his AI competitor – a gap that Timpano aims to shrink this year.

Motorsport has long been used to quickly advance technology, to test it at the ragged edge in a safe environment. That's part of A2RL's goal – to make viable autonomous tech that can be used in road car development, and to make sure Abu Dhabi is at the forefront of that.

Timpano adds: "We're trying to see the future here – through motorsport, we're looking to improve autonomous technology through racing, whether it can fly [there's an A2RL drone competition, too], can float on water, or drive on land."

There's a four-year plan for A2RL, and plenty has changed since year one, which was "about proving it could work", says Timpano. "We'll see how to evolve the league year on year."



A2RL is back under the Yas Marina lights

TO REGISTER FOR FREE TICKETS TO THE RACE, ON 15 NOVEMBER, HEAD TO [A2RL.IO](https://a2rl.io)



INSIDER

Life starts at 45 for Will Power, suggests John Oreovicz

After 17 years and two IndyCar championships, Will Power thought his future with Team Penske was secure. At 44, the Australian had no plans of retiring, and he believed he would always have a place within Roger Penske's organisation – maybe as a driver coach/engineering advisor, like Penske legend Rick Mears had done so successfully for 30 years.

Truth is, Power is a Penske legend himself. Since arriving in a substitute role during Helio Castroneves's 2009 tax evasion trial, Power won a Penske record 42 races, including the 2018 Indianapolis 500. He also holds the IndyCar record for poles with 71.

Power's contract was up for renewal at the end of 2025, and Penske management was clearly having doubts that it wanted to continue with him. There was recent precedent; at 42, Castroneves, despite wanting to continue full-time in IndyCar, was shifted to Penske's Acura sportscar programme in the IMSA championship. Helio won his fourth Indy 500 shortly after his 46th birthday in 2021 – driving for Meyer Shank Racing.

Penske's concern was fuelled by Power's winless 2023 season, when his wife, Liz, was in a life-threatening situation with a severe staph infection that invaded her spine. Will confessed to friends that he came close to retiring to focus on Liz and their son, Beau. Power's victory celebration with a still-returning-to-health Liz at Road America in 2024 was therefore especially poignant, and a three-win campaign showed that he was back to his best.

But by then, Penske had apparently already settled on a succession plan by entering a technical partnership with AJ Foyt Racing to field a car in 2025 for 23-year-old American David Malukas. With no communication about a new deal from Penske, a chill blew into the relationship

between Power and his longtime team, exacerbated when the Queensland veteran signed with Fernando Alonso's A14 management agency.

Power was vaguely told, 'We'll talk after Indy', and it was strongly hinted that another victory at Roger Penske's beloved Indy 500 would improve his chances for a multi-year contract renewal. But in June, Penske gave Power permission to talk to other teams. When Penske finally summoned him to Detroit to talk about his future – in late August, ironically after Will's only win of the season at Portland – Power politely said, 'Thanks, but no thanks'.

Few drivers (or anybody else) resist Roger Penske's demands, but Power did. For one thing, Team Penske circa 2025 looked nothing like the dominant force it was for decades. It came close to suffering its first winless IndyCar season since 1999 until Power and Josef Newgarden claimed late-season trophies, and only Power finished in the top 10 in the championship.

It also helped that throughout the summer he had been talking to Andretti Global about taking over Colton Herta's car if a plan being formulated to move the Californian to Europe in a role for the Cadillac Formula 1 team fell into place. When Andretti's IndyCar opening was confirmed, Power and the team wasted no time in coming to terms.

Frankly, Power to Andretti is a far more compelling storyline for IndyCar than what would likely have been a one-year stay of execution at Penske. It's also a remarkable opportunity for a driver who will turn 45 in March, but shows no sign of slowing down, to refresh and reinvigorate his career. And it's a tremendous catch for Honda, which will be able to tap into the technically astute Power's vast experience over the past 14 years with the Chevrolet engine programme.

“Few drivers (or anybody else) resist Roger Penske's demands, but Power did”

The Penske organisation has always been viewed by some as an 'evil empire', and the 2024-25 cheating scandal that resulted in the mid-season dismissal of longtime director Tim Cindric and two other managers was met with considerable scorn. Not surprisingly, public sentiment was 100% on Power's side as his contract drama unfolded through the summer.

It will be fascinating to see whether Power's veteran leadership can return the Andretti team to the consistent winning form it enjoyed in its glory days with Tony Kanaan, Dan Wheldon and Dario Franchitti. Equally intriguing is Penske's first major shake-up in years, where it will be sink or swim for 'Little Dave' Malukas. Suddenly, IndyCar 2026 looks a lot more interesting. ✽



Starting afresh in Japan has not been easy, but O'Sullivan is enjoying the experience



Last-minute rookie test call-up
paved way for O'Sullivan's
Super Formula opportunity

THE BRIT MAKING A FRESH START IN JAPAN

*Zak O'Sullivan seemed on the cusp of F1 at Williams before things went wrong.
Now he's taking on a new challenge away from the spotlight*

JAMIE KLEIN

In recent years, when high-profile international drivers have arrived in Japan to race in Super Formula, it has often been with the explicit goal of using the series as a launching pad to Formula 1. Think Stoffel Vandoorne, Pierre Gasly, Liam Lawson and Theo Pourchaire, even if the last-named only ended up doing a single race before leaving for IndyCar. Others have arrived in Japan after dropping off the F1 ladder in the hopes of rebuilding their careers, but few have done so after coming as close to the big-time as Zak O'Sullivan.

Heading into 2024, O'Sullivan looked like a genuine F1 prospect after an impressive season in F3, finishing runner-up to Gabriel Bortoleto. He earned two days of running at the wheel of a Williams F1 car at the

end of the year, and looked well-placed to succeed in F2 with ART Grand Prix.

Had things gone his way, it's very possible that it would have been 2021 Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Award winner O'Sullivan who got the call-up to replace Logan Sargeant at Williams mid-season. Instead, the chance went to O'Sullivan's rival on the team's junior scheme, Franco Colapinto, after ART dropped the ball with F2's new-for-2024 car. O'Sullivan didn't even see out the season as the money dried up, leaving him facing an uncertain future heading into 2025 after parting ways with Williams.

That was until the 20-year-old from Cheltenham was given a last-minute invitation by Toyota to take part in the end-of-season Super Formula rookie test at Suzuka »

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F1 test duties for Williams in November 2023 seemingly another step to the big time

CIANCAPHO STUDIO/GETTY IMAGES

“When I got the call, I was in bed in London. I got on the tube, went straight to the airport and I was on a flight two hours later”

last December with Kondo Racing, which wanted to sign a new foreign driver. After rushing to Japan, he went up against Juan Manuel Correa and James Hedley for the seat, and came out on top.

“When I got the call for the test, I was in London, I was literally still in bed in the morning,” recalls O’Sullivan, who was only announced to be taking part on the morning the three-day test started. “I got on the tube, went straight to the airport and I was on a flight two hours later. I arrived, was driven to the track, did a seat fitting and then drove the next day.

“I didn’t know what was going on – I wasn’t even aware it was a shootout. I didn’t know who was driving the other car until I turned up at the circuit and saw the name written on the side!

“It all came together super-last-minute and I wasn’t expecting it at all. I didn’t think I would be racing anything this year, maybe just some sim work for F1 teams if I could get it. I had no budget left after F2. I might have had some opportunities in GT3 racing, but it was unlikely I would get a drive for free. So Super Formula was a complete lifesaver.”

O’Sullivan knew what he was letting himself in for by joining Kondo Racing, which is not one of Super Formula’s perennial contenders. He took over the seat occupied last year by Kazuto Kotaka (14th in the points, »



Super GT campaign has helped speed up process of learning tracks

F2 promised so much – O’Sullivan did win twice, but his season ended prematurely

SUPER GT

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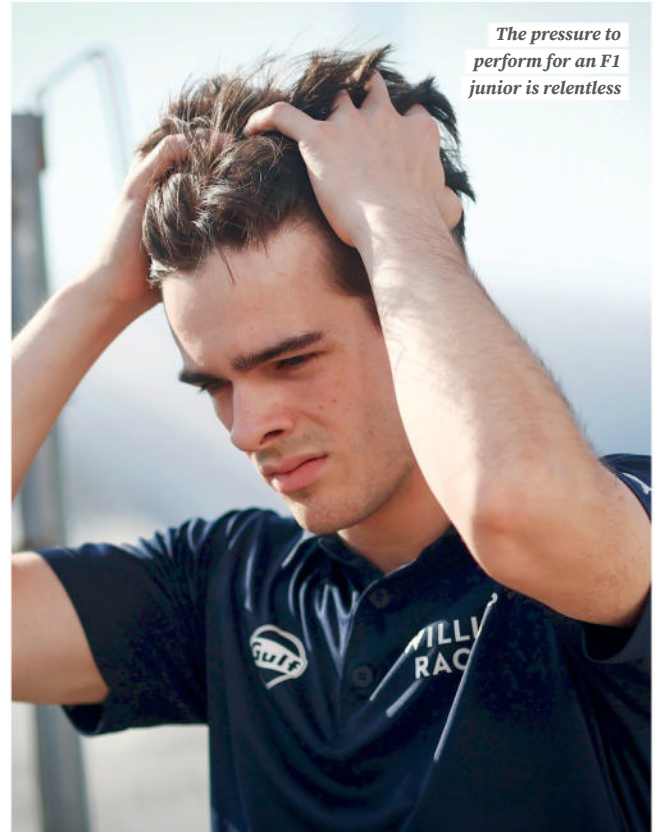
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best finish of eighth). "I was always realistic about it," he reflects of his pre-season expectations. "Even during the rookie test, I was quite far off, and you look at Kondo's results from last season; it was clear it wasn't going to be a winning season."

But one thing that did surprise him was how Japanese teams in general operate compared to what he had been used to on the European single-seater ladder. "It's a different world," he states. "Japanese racing is a lot more mechanical-based, and set-up changes are based on the experience of the engineer. Whereas in F3 and F2, it's all simulation-based. If the simulation says no, you don't do it, and you essentially arrive at the start of the weekend with the car already theoretically maximised."

"In Japan, a lot more is based on driver feeling. You have much more control as a driver, but with this control comes some peril. When I first came here, I was really excited about that, but I've found that, because the race weekends are quite compact, the chances of getting lost are much higher than finding a magic bullet."

Sharing the Kondo garage with Super Formula veteran Kenta Yamashita, a constant fixture of the team since 2017, has also been an eye-opener. "Kenta doesn't change much during the weekend and just maximises what he has instead of chasing perfection," explains O'Sullivan. "He's been with the team for so long, he has >>



The pressure to perform for an F1 junior is relentless

PORTLOCK/FORMULA 1/FORMULA MOTORSPORT LIMITED/GETTY IMAGES

"It's a different world. Japanese racing is a lot more mechanical-based. Whereas in F3 and F2, it's all simulation-based"



Kondo is not a Super Formula frontrunner, so expectations for 2025 have been realistic

YASUSHI ISHIHARA



O'Sullivan (#3) dices with fellow Williams Academy man Colapinto. The Brit shone in 2023 F3 season...

MARK SUTTON/SUTTON IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES

“It’s like a funnel: you either get close to F1 or you drop off. But that’s the reality and everyone knows it when they sign up”



...finishing runner-up in the championship to Gabriel Bortoleto

adapted his driving style to the limitations we have. He’s a bit of a Kondo specialist and that’s helped me a lot.”

Given the circumstances of his arrival in Japan, O’Sullivan says he knew it was not realistic to expect a title challenge to materialise in year one, Liam Lawson-style. Red Bull junior Lawson finished second in the points in 2023 driving for Team Mugen, one of the series’ undisputed top squads. But he does admit that it has been a lot tougher than expected.

Besides the inevitable communication teething issues, made harder by the fact that his chief engineer Kazuya Abe doesn’t speak a word of English, learning the tracks in Japan from scratch has also been a challenge for O’Sullivan – even if his education has been sped up by a parallel Super GT programme with the CarGuy MKS Racing team in the GT300 class, driving a Ferrari 296 GT3.

“The most important thing has to be commitment in the opening laps of practice,” reckons O’Sullivan. “If you are there on the first few laps, it makes the whole weekend a lot easier. You’re coming into it with drivers who are already up to speed. They are on it straight away. Their first push lap will often be their best of the session, because the tyres are at their best, whereas for me, my first push lap is normally my worst!”

Despite the difficulties, O’Sullivan is keen to highlight

JEROCKI/FORMULA 1/FORMULA MOTORS/SPORT LIMITED/GETTY IMAGES



Communication is a work in progress, as chief engineer Abe speaks no English

ZAK O'SULLIVAN CV HIGHLIGHTS

- 2024** 16th in F2 with ART Grand Prix (2 wins)
- 2023** 2nd in F3 with Prema Racing (4 wins)
- 2022** 11th in F3 with Carlin
- 2021** GB3 champion with Carlin (7 wins)
Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Award winner
- 2020** 2nd in British F4 with Carlin (9 wins)
- 2019** 2nd in Ginetta Junior with Douglas Motorsport and R Racing (3 wins)

how much he has enjoyed his Japanese foray so far, and says an extension of his relationship with Toyota into 2026 is likely: “This year hasn’t been great so far, but it’s a championship I would like to perform well in, and I’ve enjoyed Super GT as well. Whether it was GT500 or another year of GT300, I don’t really mind, but I’ve enjoyed the first year outside of the ‘Road to F1.’”

Indeed, O’Sullivan describes the change of mindset that comes with no longer being preoccupied by chasing the next step up the single-seater ladder, or with ensuring he came out on top against his fellow Williams juniors in any given category, as “quite refreshing”.

“I always put a lot of pressure on myself, but especially from F4 onwards,” O’Sullivan reflects. “I always knew that I only had the budget to do one year of each championship, which was fine until I got to F3 with Carlin and that was a bit tougher. Until then, I was trying to win each championship in the first year.

“Also in the Williams Academy, you are always being evaluated, especially on F1 weekends. You walk into the motorhome and they are showing F2 practice or F3 practice on the screens, so you know you are being watched! You try and put that out of your mind, but there’s still pressure. It has taken me a while to get out of that mindset and chill out slightly.

“I want to perform, but also there is more leniency,

not only in Japan, but just outside the F1 ladder. Up to now, my mindset has been that if you’re struggling after the first two rounds, you might get dropped or you won’t get a seat for next year. But out here, I’ve just driven.”

O’Sullivan has no regrets with how it ended at Williams, for nobody could have foreseen how badly ART would get it wrong in F2 last season. “That first year in F2 is make or break,” he opines. “And it can work both ways – look at [McLaren-backed] Alex Dunne, who was nothing special in F3 and now is on the F1 radar. It’s like a funnel: you either get close to F1 or you drop off. But that’s the reality and everyone knows it when they sign up.”

Of course, had O’Sullivan been handed the Williams F1 chance last year instead of Colapinto, it may not have made a great deal of difference to his long-term prospects, with Ferrari outcast Carlos Sainz incoming at the Grove team for 2025 anyway – although it might have saved Jack Doohan from being dropped after a handful of races at Alpine!

And if O’Sullivan can establish a true foothold in Super Formula and Super GT – in which he became a class winner at Suzuka in August – with the backing of Toyota, it’s quite possible that he could end up having the longer and more successful career of the two former rivals on the Williams junior roster. 🏆

Sportscars back to Silverstone

Forty-four cars graced the grid – and a bumper crowd the grandstands and spectator enclosures – at Silverstone in mid-September as international endurance racing returned to British shores after a six-year absence. Oliver Gray leads the way in his VDS Panis ORECA at the start of an eventful four-hour race that stretched through two red flags and heavy rain. Fittingly there was a British winner: Jamie Chadwick shared the triumphant IDEC ORECA with Daniel Juncadella and Mathys Jaubert that took the flag first by a shade under six seconds. The event increases hopes of a World Endurance return...

Photography Jakob Ebrey
Photography

Where Silverstone, Northants, UK
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Ferrari driver Molina reckoned final-hour delay cost #50 car a crack at winning Porsche

JAMES MOY PHOTOGRAPHY/GETTY IMAGES

WORLD ENDURANCE CHAMPIONSHIP

PORSCHE AVOIDS PENALTY TO BEAT FERRARI IN THE RAIN

Rain is the great leveller. Without it, Porsche would not have returned to the winner's circle in the World Endurance Championship at Austin. In the dry, its 963 LMDh was no more than a top-six car, reckoned Kevin Estre. But the triumph for the Frenchman and team-mates Laurens Vanthoor and Matt Campbell over a race that was wet for pretty much its duration had more than a hint of controversy about it.

That controversy provided the turning point of the Lone Star Le Mans six-hour race: a coming-together between Estre and Alessandro Pier Guidi aboard the points-leading Ferrari 499P Le Mans Hypercar with an hour and 45 minutes on the clock. Estre moved into the lead as the race went green after the fifth of six safety cars to punctuate a chaotic event that also included a red flag. The post-race polemics were triggered by a pair of brushes with the Italian machine.

Contact was made as Estre dived up the inside into Turn 1 at the 3.43-mile Circuit of The Americas. It was the lightest of touches with the car Pier Guidi shared with Antonio Giovinazzi and James Calado, but it was enough to puncture the left-front tyre of the Ferrari, sending it pitward and ending its chance of winning round six of the 2025 WEC.

Ferrari wasn't happy, but its complaint wasn't directed at the Turn 1 contact. Rather, it was upset about a clash several hundred metres earlier at the

beginning of the start/finish straight as the safety car peeled into the pitlane. There was another touch, as light as light can be, but it was enough for the Ferrari to lose momentum up the straight. It was this that allowed Estre to manoeuvre his Porsche into a position where he could make his ultimately successful bid for the lead. This was the incident at which the race stewards directed their eyes, though the factory Penske Porsche squad confirmed that each of the contacts had been examined.

The second was clearly a racing incident; Ferrari agreed with that. But it questioned the decision of the stewards to only give Estre a warning for the

earlier contact. "A bit weird," was how Giuliano Salvi, Ferrari's sportscar race and testing manager, described what came out of the stewards' office. "I am a bit surprised in terms of the management of the situation. The touch was before the line. The leader should start the procedure [at the restart] and the other one should be behind."

What he was saying is that it was down to Pier Guidi as the race leader to control the field at the restart, unfettered by the car behind once the safety car is in the pitlane. What happened at Turn 1, he argued, was the upshot of the little tap Pier Guidi received in the final corner. "The one in Turn 1



JAMES MOY PHOTOGRAPHY/GETTY IMAGES

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was a racing incident, but it was a consequence of Estre being on the inside,” continued Salvi. “With a normal restart he wouldn’t have had the chance to make the dive.” Pier Guidi put it more simply: “I believe the move at the restart was not correct.”

A contributing factor to the incident at Turn 20 was the unconventional line Pier Guidi took. He had been directed by the AF Corse Ferrari team to take what Salvi called a “very internal line”. Pier Guidi was told to turn in late to be able to exploit the higher grip on the inside of the straight on exit.

Estre, on the other hand, took a more conventional route around the left-hander. It put them on a collision course and perhaps influenced the stewards in their decision not to penalise the Porsche man with a drive-through. Salvi’s point that it was down to Pier Guidi to control the field remained a valid one, though it would be wrong to suggest that Estre was ever alongside before the start/finish line.

This was a race Ferrari believed it should have won. It would have done so had the Porsche been penalised: victory would have gone to the sister factory Ferrari shared by Nicklas Nielsen, Antonio Fuoco and Miguel Molina that finished 8.6 seconds back at the chequered flag. But what about if Pier Guidi had remained ahead at the fateful restart, and hadn’t got the puncture? There has to be a question mark against that one because at this stage of the race, the German marque enjoyed a not insignificant pace advantage over the Italian one that had hitherto looked in control.

Estre was able to pull away from Molina with ease after taking the lead. By the end of the first post-restart lap, the 963 was nearly 6s up on the 499P. A lap later the gap was 7.8s. Two laps after that the margin was into double figures before the safety car was called again. Afterwards the Porsche quickly re-established some breathing space, before and after a quick-fire Full Course Yellow virtual safety car shortly before the five-hour mark.

“The car was great during that stage of the race,” reckoned Estre. “They had a bit of an upper hand when there was a lot of water and aquaplaning, and a little bit towards the end as well.”

That said, the second-placed 499P was the slower of the two Ferraris that weekend. Even so, Molina reckoned he lost at least a shot at the victory when he was delayed – he put the time loss at four or five seconds – during a second FCY in the final hour. He was caught up behind one of the TF Sport Chevrolet Corvette LMGT3 contenders that the Spaniard insisted was going slower than the 80km/h allowed by the rules.

“The pace was there and I think we lost a lot with this FCY and the Corvette,” explained Molina. “That was a shame because we were catching the Porsche. It took away an opportunity.”

The puncture did likewise for Pier Guidi, who described his fightback to fifth as “almost a miracle”. That begs a question. Would the speed that allowed him to haul the car up from as low as 12th have been enough to beat the Porsche?

GARY WATKINS

EBREY/LAT/GETTY IMAGES



RESULTS ROUND 6/8

LM HYPERCAR/OVERALL

- Kevin Estre/Laurens Vanthoor/
Matt Campbell**
Porsche 963
(Porsche Penske Motorsport)
120 laps in 6h01m25.310s
Grid 3rd (1m58.619s)
- Antonio Fuoco/Miguel Molina/
Nicklas Nielsen**
Ferrari 499P
(Ferrari AF Corse)
+8.625s
Grid 4th (1m58.640s)
- Loic Duval/Malthe Jakobsen/
Stoffel Vandoorne**
Peugeot 9X8
(Peugeot TotalEnergies)
+9.541s
Grid 11th (2m00.744s)
- Paul di Resta/Mikkel Jensen/
Jean-Eric Vergne**
Peugeot 9X8
(Peugeot TotalEnergies)
+15.149s
Grid 18th (no time)
- Alessandro Pier Guidi/James Calado/
Antonio Giovinazzi**
Ferrari 499P
(Ferrari AF Corse)
+22.619s
Grid 2nd (1m57.751s)

LMGT3

- Darren Leung/Sean Gelael/
Marino Sato**
McLaren 720S GT3 Evo
(United Autosports)
115 laps in 6h01m36.154s
Grid 3rd (2m08.262s)
- Ahmad Al Harthy/Valentino Rossi/
Kelvin van der Linde**
BMW M4 GT3 Evo
(Team WRT)
+0.256s
Grid 4th (2m08.972s)
- Thomas Flohr/Davide Rigon/
Francesco Castellacci**
Ferrari 296 GT3
(Vista AF Corse)
+2.705s (5s penalty for causing a collision)
Grid 14th (2m18.128s)

Pole **Robert Kubica** (Ferrari 499P)
1m57.655s (104.817mph)

Fastest lap **Estre** 2m03.443s (99.902mph)

POINTS 1 Pier Guidi/Calado/Giovinazzi 115; 2 Kubica/Yifei Ye/Phil Hanson 100; 3 Estre/Vanthoor 79.



Habsburg and Chatin
hop on board with Milesi
for Alpine victory celebration

WAN MIKHAIL ROSLAN/NURPHOTO/GETTY IMAGES

WORLD ENDURANCE CHAMPIONSHIP

ALPINE MAKES ITS OWN LUCK TO PIP PEUGEOT AND PORSCHE

A Full Course Yellow in the World Endurance Championship has oft been described as akin to the Virtual Safety Car in Formula 1. The WEC from this year, however, has a VSC of its own as distinct from an FCY. And the difference between them went a long way to explaining why Alpine triumphed with the A424 LMDh shared by Ferdinand Habsburg, Paul-Loup Chatin and Charles Milesi at the Fuji 6 Hours.

An FCY is generally called when there is a need for a short, sharp neutralisation, perhaps to deal with debris or to collect an errant car, everyone running around at 80km/h. A WEC VSC leads into

a full safety car when a longer period of yellow-flag running is required. The speed limit is the same, but there is a key difference. The pit entry shuts under FCY, but it stays open during a VSC to allow everyone to get in and out of the pits before they close for the initial safety car laps. So, when Chatin ducked in moments before they closed with just under two and a half hours to go, a full service and a handover to Milesi were undertaken when the rest of the field was trundling around at 80 klicks. That in itself was good fortune for the Alpine at the start of what turned out to be the penultimate round

of stops. Four of the cars that had been ahead of the Alpine, eighth in the order before the cycle began, had already pitted under the green flag.

It turned into a double stroke of luck when it was obvious that retrieving the Aston Martin Valkyrie Le Mans Hypercar that Tom Gamble had just speared into The Heart of Racing team's LMGT3 Vantage at Turn 3 was going to be harder than expected. So the FCY became a full safety car. That meant those that hadn't pitted, all running short on their per stint energy allocation, would have to come in before the pits reopened after three safety car laps. Their so-called emergency stop for a splash of fuel would then be followed by a return to the pitlane for their stops proper.

Suddenly the Alpine was in the mix at the sharp end, a massive turnaround given that at the end of the second hour it was down in 15th. It was the better part of a lap off the lead, after two penalties: a five-second stop/go for an early-race clash, and a hold in the pits of the same duration due to a pitstop infringement.

Though fortune smiled on Alpine at a venue where 12 months previously it had notched up the A424's maiden WEC podium, it wasn't quite right to say that the French manufacturer lucked into its first Hypercar victory since



Front-row-starting Cadillacs
ended up sixth and 13th

WAN MIKHAIL ROSLAN/NURPHOTO/GETTY IMAGES

Riberas/Sorensen's fifth place best finish so far for Aston Valkyrie

JAMES MOY PHOTOGRAPHY/GETTY IMAGES



Peugeot kept Porsche at bay to hold on to runner-up slot

JAMES MOY PHOTOGRAPHY/GETTY IMAGES



winning at Monza in 2022 with its grandfathered A480 LMP1. You make your own luck, they say, and Signatech Alpine did that in Japan. Stuck behind the other Valkyrie with Alex Riberas at the wheel, Chatin had been told to go into fuel-save mode. The extra lap by which he eked out his energy would turn out to be crucial.

Milesi also still had to deliver in the closing stages, and he had the car under him to do it – the A424 was among the fastest on the averages at Fuji. He didn't emerge in the lead after the final safety car, rather in second position. Leading was Mikkel Jensen in the #93 Peugeot 9X8 2024 LMH shared with Paul di Resta and Jean-Eric Vergne. Nor was the Alpine even second when the cars ducked into the pits for the final time with an hour remaining: Milesi had lost out to a flying Kevin Estre in the #6 Penske Porsche 963 LMDh.

But now Alpine rolled the dice and opted to change only two tyres, while Peugeot and Porsche went for four fresh Michelins. Suddenly the Alpine was in front. The big question was whether Milesi could maintain an advantage that stood at around eight seconds once the pitstops were completed. The answer was a resounding yes: he was even able to extend his lead, edging it out to as much as 11s before crossing the line 7.7s to the good.

Any number of manufacturers might have won the Fuji 6 Hours on the last weekend of September. "It was a race where a lot of people could say, 'if, if, if,'" reckoned Laurens Vanthoor,

Estre's team-mate in the #6 Porsche. That applied to Estre and Vanthoor more than anyone at Fuji. A victory for a car that had ended up at the back of the Hypercar pack in qualifying, after Estre locked up on his second hot lap, looked more than an outside bet for much of the second half of the race. Vanthoor was able to haul the Porsche up to seventh in the space of the opening hour, only to get hit up the rear by Rene Rast's BMW at the end of the first FCY.

Even with the time lost to a change of bodywork, it still might have won. The same goes for the extra pitstop it made during that final safety car. Estre had the pace to haul the car back up to second ahead of Milesi during hour five. But the final blow to Porsche's hopes came with a penalty for a pitstop infringement. It was announced just as Estre was making that pass on Milesi, though the infraction occurred two hours before, when a mechanic started working on the car before the engine was switched off.

The 5s hold that Vanthoor had to take after getting back in for the run to the flag proved decisive. It meant he came out behind Jensen, and that's where he pretty much stayed for the remainder of the race, even if he did once get his nose in front through the twiddly final sector.

Did Vanthoor have the pace to claw back the lost seconds to Milesi? Estre's speed in the previous hour and the fact that the car had four fresh Michelins at the end suggested he could have at least made life hard for Milesi.

GARY WATKINS

RESULTS ROUND 7/8

LM HYPERCAR/OVERALL

- Paul-Loup Chatin/Ferdinand Habsburg/Charles Milesi**
Alpine A424
(Alpine Endurance Team/Signatech)
202 laps in 6h00m38.167s
Grid 9th (1m29.080s)
- Paul di Resta/Mikkel Jensen/Jean-Eric Vergne**
Peugeot 9X8
(Peugeot TotalEnergies)
+7.682s
Grid 4th (1m28.716s)
- Kevin Estre/Laurens Vanthoor**
Porsche 963
(Porsche Penske Motorsport)
+8.167s
Grid 17th (1m29.920s)
- Julien Andlauer/Mathieu Jaminet**
Porsche 963
(Porsche Penske Motorsport)
+16.083s
Grid 7th (1m29.031s)
- Alex Riberas/Marco Sorensen**
Aston Martin Valkyrie
(Aston Martin THOR Team)
+39.761s
Grid 3rd (1m28.705s)

LMGT3

- Tom Van Rompuy/Rui Andrade/Charlie Eastwood**
Chevrolet Corvette Z06 GT3.R
(TF Sport)
185 laps in 6h02m03.218s
Grid 7th (1m40.490s)
- Francois Heriau/Simon Mann/Alessio Rovera**
Ferrari 296 GT3
(AF Corse)
+3.010s (5s penalty for pitlane infringement)
Grid 10th (1m40.819s)
- Yasser Shahin/Timur Boguslavskiy/Augusto Farfus**
BMW M4 GT3 Evo
(The Bend Team WRT)
+4.888s
Grid 14th (1m41.788s)

Pole **Alex Lynn** (Cadillac V-Series.R)
1m28.236s (115.679mph)

Fastest lap **Will Stevens**
(Cadillac V-Series.R)
1m30.507s (112.777mph)

POINTS 1 Alessandro Pier Guidi/James Calado/Antonio Giovinazzi 115; 2 Robert Kubica/Yifei Ye/Phil Hanson 102; 3 Estre/Vanthoor 94.



Some retro fun: Ford C100s of 1982 weren't in-house – they were run by Zakspeed

LAT/GETTY IMAGES

WEC

FORD TO RUN ITS HYPERCAR PROGRAMME IN-HOUSE

Ford is going it alone for its entry into the World Endurance Championship's Hypercar division: it is setting up its own team in the UK to field its pair of LMDh racers from 2027.

The team will operate out of a new facility in Banbury, at the same time as Ford leverages its deep technical resource base. Name-checked in its statement announcing its strategy in September were facilities in Dearborn, Michigan and Charlotte, North Carolina, as well as Red Bull Ford Powertrains, which is developing the new Ford-badged Formula 1 engine to come on stream next season.

"Breaking from the traditional model of many manufacturers – and often our own model in the past – Ford Racing will oversee and manage every aspect of our prototype sportscar racing project," said Mark Rushbrook, global director of Ford Racing. "We are not looking outside our walls to find who can run a programme for us; we are looking within Ford Racing to build our programmes infused with our passion."

Rushbrook added that the strategy "gives us the ability

to react more quickly on track, enhancing our competitiveness" and "allows us to bring technology back to our road cars more effectively and efficiently than ever before".

The new team will be overseen by Dan Sayers, who at the Le Mans 24 Hours was announced as the LMDh programme manager. The Brit has moved over from Red Bull, where he was latterly head of the powertrain division set up in 2021, and previously worked for Prodrive on its Aston Martin Racing programmes.

Witney-based motorsport consultancy group Venture Engineering will provide what Ford called "technical and operational support" for the new operation. It was founded in 2015 by a group of ex-Prodrive employees and counts Roald Goethe, who formerly raced AMR Astons, among its directors.

The internal combustion element of the Ford LMDh's powertrain is also being developed in-house. Its configuration has yet to be confirmed, but heavy hints have been dropped that it will be normally aspirated.

GARY WATKINS

WEC

PORSCHE OUT OF WEC FOR 2026 – BUT IT WILL STAY IN IMSA

Porsche will end its factory involvement in the Hypercar class of the World Endurance Championship at the end of 2025. But the German manufacturer's 963 LMDh will race on with the Porsche Penske Motorsport worksquad in the IMSA SportsCar series next year.

The IMSA campaign will be one of two official Porsche motorsport programmes in 2026 along with a continued participation in Formula E. The decision to quit WEC, in which it won the drivers' title in 2024, announced early in early October was buried in a statement reaffirming its commitment to those two series.

"We very much regret that, due to the current circumstances, we will not be continuing our involvement in the WEC after this season," said Michael Steiner, the board member responsible for motorsport. The only elaboration was provided by a description of its IMSA programme as "underlining the importance of the North American market".

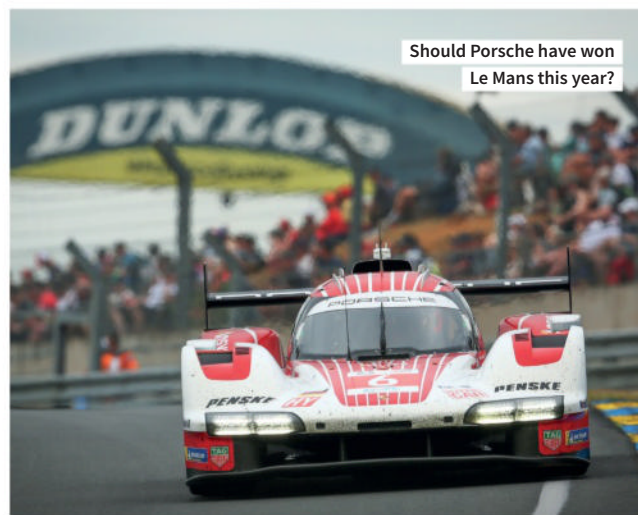
Porsche's decision to slim down the PPM programme that has operated as a twin-pronged

attack on WEC and IMSA since 2023 comes against a backdrop of financial problems for the brand. Porsche sales are down in the face of the introduction of import tariffs in the US and falling demand in China. In July, company CEO Oliver Blume announced a plan to reduce the workforce by 10% before 2029 as he outlined a future in which Porsche sales peak at 250,000 rather than 300,000-plus.

But sporting considerations were also being taken into account as a decision on the future was being made, explained Porsche Motorsport boss Thomas Laudenbach earlier in the summer. He made a veiled reference to the Balance of Performance when he highlighted the near-perfect race enjoyed by the #6 Porsche shared by Kevin Estre, Laurens Vanthoor and Matt Campbell on the way to second at the Le Mans 24 Hours.

"Second is not bad if you look at the competition, but it did hurt because the #6 was close to what I would call a perfect race," he said. "Frankly speaking the #6 should have won the race."

GARY WATKINS



Should Porsche have won Le Mans this year?

ROBERTSON/GETTY IMAGES



ELMS

ENDURO RETURN TO SILVERSTONE IS A SUCCESS

A second victory of 2025 for the ILMCO Sport crew of Daniel Juncadella, Jamie Chadwick and Mathys Jaubert at Silverstone in September has blown the European Le Mans Series title race wide open. Just seven points cover the top three in the championship race ahead of the series finale at the Algarve Circuit.

Juncadella held on for a 5.9s victory aboard his ILMCO ORECA-Gibson 07 LMP2 from a closing Tom Dillmann, sharing the best of the Inter Europol cars co-driven by Nick Yelloly and Jakub Smiechowski. The result thrust both entries into contention in Portugal on 18 October on a bad day for points leaders Charles Milesi, Esteban

Masson and Oliver Gray. They could only finish 11th – although eighth in class, behind three LMP2 pro-am entries – as a result of a 17s stop/go penalty for running a red light in the pits.

The ILMCO entry entered the equation on the arrival of the threatened storm that resulted in the start being moved forward by an hour. A perfectly timed pitstop combined with a spin for Yelloly on his in-lap gave ILMCO the lead of a race that had already been twice halted by a red flag.

A strong crowd for the race bodes well for the bid to bring the WEC back to the UK in 2027, reckoned Silverstone managing director Stuart Pringle. “We’re absolutely delighted and really encouraged by the level of enthusiasm among the British motorsport public,” he said. “It gives us great heart for the concept of bringing the World Endurance Championship back and we continue to push towards that.”

GARY WATKINS

RACE WINNERS 6 September - 5 October

IMSA SPORTSCAR

Indianapolis 21 September

- 1 **Jack Aitken/Earl Bamber/Frederik Vesti**
(Action Express Cadillac V-Series.R)
- 2 **Ricky Taylor/Filipe Albuquerque**
(Wayne Taylor Racing Cadillac V-Series.R)
- 3 **Tom Blomqvist/Colin Braun**
(Meyer Shank Racing Acura ARX-06)

POINTS 1 **Matt Campbell/Mathieu Jaminet** 2582; 2 Nick Tandy/Felipe Nasr 2451; 3 Philipp Eng/Dries Vanthoor 2437.

EUROPEAN LE MANS SERIES

Silverstone 14 September

Daniel Juncadella/Mathys Jaubert/Jamie Chadwick (ILMCO Sport ORECA 07)

POINTS 1 **Charles Milesi/Esteban Masson/Oliver Gray** 81; 2 Juncadella/Jaubert/Chadwick 75; 3 Nick Yelloly/Tom Dillmann/Jakub Smiechowski 74.

GTWC EUROPE SPRINT CUP

Valencia 20-21 September

Race 1 Jordan Pepper/Luca Engstler
(GRT Lamborghini Huracan GT3 EVO2)

Race 2 K van der Linde/Charles Weerts
(Team WRT BMW M4 GT3 Evo)

POINTS 1 **van der Linde/Weerts** 88.5; 2 Pepper/Engstler 81.5; 3 Marvin Kirchhofer/Benjamin Goethe 80.

DTM

Red Bull Ring 13-14 September

Race 1 Rene Rast
(Schubert Motorsport BMW M4 GT3 Evo)

Race 2 Ricardo Feller
(Land Motorsport Audi R8 LMS GT3 Evo II)

Hockenheim 4-5 October

Race 1 Thomas Preining
(Manthey EMA Porsche 911 GT3-R)

Race 2 Ayhan Guven
(Manthey EMA Porsche 911 GT3-R)

POINTS 1 **Guven** 192; 2 Lucas Auer 188; 3 Maro Engel 184.

INTERCONTINENTAL GT CHALLENGE

Suzuka 1000Km 14 September

Raffaele Marciello/Kelvin van der Linde/Charles Weerts
(Team WRT BMW M4 GT3 Evo)

POINTS 1 **van der Linde** 85; 2 Marciello 80; 3 Augusto Farfus 72.



IMSA Cadillac took its first win of the IMSA SportsCar season in the six-hour race at Indianapolis, with regulars Jack Aitken and Earl Bamber joined in the Action Express-run Whelen V-Series.R by Frederik Vesti. Aitken fended off Ricky Taylor during the final stint to spearhead a 1-2 for the marque.



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INSIDER

The WEC has a problem that's not easy to fix, reckons Gary Watkins

It's not often I go to bed after a World Endurance Championship race not knowing the result. Not that I knew I didn't know the result, if you know what I mean. Sure, the classification was still provisional when I hit the hay, but I wasn't prepared for the changes to which I woke up on Monday. The stewards worked deep into the night in Japan – the official results were time stamped 00:02!

The only change in the points-paying positions in Hypercar was the demotion of the fifth-placed Peugeot to 10th. A drive-through picked up for a safety car infringement was converted into a 53-second penalty for the #94 car. As bad as that was for Stoffel Vandoorne, Loic Duval and Malthe Jakobsen, the WEC probably had a lucky escape that the raft of penalties that came out oh so late didn't affect the podium finishers. That wouldn't have looked good. But that's to miss the point of the late change of result, or rather the speed at which decisions were dealt with by the stewards during – and after – the Fuji 6 Hours at the end of September. Those delays didn't change the front end of the result, but they arguably affected it.

I'm going to focus on the #6 Penske Porsche that finished third in the hands of Laurens Vanthoor and Kevin Estre. Notification of a penalty for a pitstop infraction came just as Estre was passing Charles Milesi in the winning Alpine for second place in hour five. The five-second hold the car had to take at its final pitstop almost certainly robbed it of a shot at victory. Those seconds ensured Vanthoor emerged from the pitstop cycle behind Mikkel Jensen in the #93 Peugeot, which he then spent the final hour unsuccessfully trying to pass.

Had he come out ahead of the Peugeot that Jensen shared with Paul di Resta and Jean-Eric Vergne, there is every reason to believe that he would have taken the fight to the Alpine. Estre had proved the Porsche was quicker than the French car in the penultimate hour, and had four

new Michelins under him whereas Milesi had just the two.

Porsche got it wrong in the pits when a mechanic started working on the car before the engine was switched off and was duly penalised. Nothing wrong with that, except the infringement didn't come when Estre handed over to his team-mate for the run to the flag. Rather it happened three hours before, at the third round of pitstops that took place during the second of three safety cars at Fuji.

Given that there was another safety car in between the infraction taking place and the punishment being communicated to the team, the time it took for the penalty to come through arguably proved crucial. The effect of those five seconds had they been taken before the final safety car would have not necessarily been nullified but certainly mitigated in some way. The later a penalty comes, the less time a crew has to overcome it with strategy, pure pace or just plain luck if the field closes up behind the safety car.

The bottleneck in the stewards' room was perhaps an inevitable consequence of the most chaotic WEC race I can remember in all my years covering the championship in its current guise. 'Chaotic' in sportscar racing often means lots of yellow flag neutralisations, safety cars of the real and virtual kind, and Full Course Yellows. The more of those you have, the more important it is for incidents on track and pitlane violations to be dealt with quickly.

The workload for the stewards was ultra-high at Fuji: no fewer than 56 decisions emanated from their office during the race, a good percentage of them concerning on-track incidents that needed full, careful and therefore time-consuming consideration. That compares with 35 during the Austin WEC round earlier in September and 33 at Interlagos in July. For some reason my mind has conjured up an image of a long and winding queue of team managers lined up outside the stewards' room like

“The later a penalty comes, the less time a crew has to overcome it with strategy, pace or plain luck”

naughty schoolboys waiting to enter a headmaster's study. It might not represent reality, but it's indicative of the challenge the race officials faced.

I'm not sure what the answer is. More stewards, two sets perhaps? New procedures? Or, whisper it, something akin to the semi-automated Video Assistant Referee technology introduced in Premier League football? I don't know the answer, only that one needs to be found.

Here we are in a so-called golden age of sportscar racing, and yet we are faced with a situation where the outcome of races could be decided by the timing of the decisions in an office. That may well have been the case at Fuji, but we will never know for sure. The race was far too chaotic for that. Trying to follow it took it out of my ageing brain. No wonder I was in bed early. ✽



THE NEXT BIG STEP FOR WORLD SPORTSCAR RACING?

Hypercar has undoubtedly brought more manufacturers to endurance competition, but there's one key development that could really push things along...

GARY WATKINS

PHOTOGRAPHY GETTY IMAGES

There's always been an elephant in the room in the Hypercar class of the World Endurance Championship since the start of what we have quickly come to call a golden age. And it's that cars built to two different rulesets – Le Mans Hypercar and LMDh – compete against each other at the front of the series. But now there appears to be a real desire among the manufacturers to move towards common regulations, or something approaching them, in the name of closer competition.

That process started in Paris in mid-September with the first of the follow-up meetings to the announcement made at the Le Mans 24 Hours in June that the Hypercar division will be prolonged by another three years until the end of 2032. That came 12 months after the two-year extension through to the conclusion of 2029.

It is important to make a distinction between what was said by the Automobile Club de l'Ouest and the FIA, which jointly run the WEC, in each of the past two years. The first announcement was that the homologation of the current cars will now run through 2029. The extension rubberstamped by the World Motor Sport Council this June concerned the class rather than the cars. This offers the hope that the rules can come together when the new decade turns to create a fairer and closer playing field. And one possibly less reliant on the Balance of Performance.

ACO president Pierre Fillon said at the Le Mans-organising club's traditional Friday press conference at Le Mans that the "practicalities need to be discussed", while suggesting that they "will be worked out by the end of the year". That may not be an optimistic timescale given the will on the part of the manufacturers to move towards some kind of alignment of the two sets of rules.

Different manufacturers have different requirements when they go racing at the pinnacle of the WEC. Ferrari stressed, as it was looking to join the Hypercar field, that it had to have a bespoke chassis: a Ferrari has to be a Ferrari, even if its development partner on the monocoque is Dallara. What it couldn't do was use the same chassis spine from one of the four licensed

constructors, Dallara included, around which LMDhs are built: one of its cars couldn't be developed around the same tub as a Chevrolet or a BMW. That was primary among the reasons why it chose the LMH route.

Toyota's WEC engagement has always been billed as a programme led on the benefits it brings to the marque in terms of research and development rather than marketing value. It needs to be able to develop its own energy retrieval technology and battery together with its partners. The idea of using the LMDh off-the-shelf hybrid system is anathema to Toyota.

But those manufacturers that chose the ostensibly cheaper LMDh route are saying there is no reason why the demands of Ferrari and Toyota couldn't be incorporated into revised rules that appear likely to be closer to LMDh than LMH. (The idea of a wholesale switchover to LMDh appears to have been quietly forgotten.)

Does it matter if a manufacturer wants to build its »

“There appears to be a real desire among manufacturers to move towards common regulations”



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own LMDh chassis rather than getting one off the peg? Or develop its own hybrid technology rather than using the spec rear-axle LMDh package produced by Bosch Motorsport, Fortescue Zero (formerly Williams Advanced Engineering) and Xtrac? No, says Porsche Motorsport boss Thomas Laudenbach, whose marque is in the LMDh camp with its 963. That's so long as the technical regulations are the same for everyone and offer the same chance for development.

Asked whether the LMDh rules could be tweaked to allow manufacturers to develop their own chassis and hybrid systems, Laudenbach says: "This is absolutely possible. I think there is a solution for that. I fully accept a manufacturer saying, 'This is important to me': everything I have heard so far can be solved. I am not saying it is easy. You just have to make a technical description of what is allowed."

Andreas Roos – head of motorsport at BMW, another marque in the LMDh camp – offers a similar opinion. "We need to be clever and make the technical regulations in a certain way so no one has an advantage and the basic technical regulations are the same for everyone," he states. "For me this is possible."

Bruno Famin, vice-president of motorsport at Alpine,

"This should be the target – to have a common platform to ensure a balanced field"

reckons "the way forward doesn't look very complicated". The trick, he says, will be ensuring costs do not rise with new technical freedoms. "Technically speaking it is not very complicated," he explains. "But we have to be careful to maintain the costs at a reasonable level, because if everyone has to develop his own battery, his own MGU, his own I don't know what, it won't be the same story."

The official line from Ferrari is that it is "open" to the idea of convergence. But back at the start of the year, Ferdinando Cannizzo, technical director of its sportscar programmes, was forthright in his belief that a common platform can be the only way forward for the WEC.

"For me this should be the target – to have a common platform to ensure a balanced field," he said on the launch of its 2025 campaign in Maranello. "If we have to develop a rear hybrid system or whatever, I am still a fan of the concept of having a single platform."

There appears to be no reason why the four-wheel drive allowed in LMH should be a sticking point. Its advantages were all but wiped out under the first round of convergence as the WEC prepared to allow in the initial wave of LMDh machinery in 2023. The deployment speed of the electric power via the front axle was raised from 120km/h for 2022 on its move from the technical regulations to the BoP, and has been nailed on at 190km/h ever since for all but the original version of Peugeot's 9X8 LMH. It means that hybrid power is now pretty much only deployed in a straight line.

Peugeot talked a lot about all-wheel drive when it announced its return to frontline sportscar racing, >>



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Despite a push to do away with it, BoP is set to remain an integral part of Hypercar

but it appears in favour of the latest drive towards a communality of the rules. “Overall, our position is that there’s nothing crazy about trying to unify the technical regulations of the cars,” says Peugeot Sport technical director Olivier Janssonie. “The question is about the timing – when and how? This needs to be clarified.”

The question of timing is a pertinent one for Peugeot, because it has requested to be allowed to develop a replacement for the current version of the 9X8 introduced early last year. Some manufacturers have argued that the move to something approaching common regulations is urgent and can’t wait until 2030. Famin describes waiting until then as “a problem”.

The timing for the revised Hypercar rules appears to be one thing decided at the September meeting held at Charles de Gaulle Airport: there will be no change until after the current homologation period ends. No one will say that on the record because the manufacturers have been under strict instructions not to talk about events in Paris, but privately there have been multiple admissions that the status quo will be maintained until the conclusion of 2029.

There was another key decision made in Paris – that the BoP will have to remain an integral part of the Hypercar division. It is known that there was a push, and it centred on Ferrari, to do away with it forthwith. It hasn’t admitted to it, but Mauro Barbieri, sportscar head of performance, has suggested that it is “realistic” while also “a complicated matter”. But the rest of the Hypercar field railed against doing away with the BoP. Roos points

“The question is about the timing – when and how? This needs to be clarified”

out that it was one of the “foundations” of the rules. For Famin it is an essential cost-reduction tool; he uses the word “ambitious” to describe any bid to do away with it.

There seemed to have been some support from the organisers for the removal of the BoP, not least because the travails they have endured getting it right – or failing to do so – this year have resulted in a stream of criticism. There has been the suggestion that the rehomologation of the entire Hypercar field in the Windshear wind tunnel in North Carolina would have resulted in what multiple sources defined as “more robust performance parameters” to allow the BoP to be banished.

But the manufacturers through their representatives on the Endurance Commission, the kitchen cabinet that runs the WEC, called for the BoP to remain. It is understood that only one manufacturer was not a signatory to a letter with that demand presented in Paris by Kazuki Nakajima and Eric Warren, from Toyota and Cadillac respectively, demanding that the BoP needs to stay.

The manufacturers appear to be making all the right noises when it comes to convergence 2.0. The WEC really does appear to be heading for a common set of regulations, give or take. It might be just what’s needed for Hypercar to truly shine in this golden age. ✎





Toyota's newest flying Finn

Toyota's Sami Pajari and co-driver Marko Salminen take flight over the Rally Chile Power Stage flying finish. The Finnish rookie has shown flashes of pace this year and in Chile the 23-year-old was on the pace with the frontrunners throughout, finishing fifth, only 4.4 seconds behind reigning world champion Thierry Neuville's Hyundai. The rally gave Pajari the biggest points haul (14) of his top-flight career to date and included a fifth stage win. "I was on a mission to catch Thierry and we caught him a little bit but not quite enough," said Pajari. "But we were catching him and that was nice to see."

Photographer Tom Banks/
McKlein

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Ogier's victory makes Toyota the manufacturer with most WRC wins

ROUND 11/14 RALLY CHILE RESULTS

- 1 Sebastien Ogier/
Vincent Landais**
Toyota GR Yaris Rally1
(Toyota Gazoo Racing)
2h55m42.1s
- 2 Elfyn Evans/Scott Martin**
Toyota GR Yaris Rally1
(Toyota Gazoo Racing)
+11.0s
- 3 Adrien Fourmaux/
Alexandre Coria**
Hyundai i20 N Rally1
(Hyundai Motorsport)
+46.5s

POINTS 1 Ogier 224; 2 Evans 222; 3 Kalle Rovanpera 203.

WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

PART-TIME OGIER TAKES TITLE LEAD WITH CHILE CHARGE

Sebastien Ogier edged closer to a record-equalling ninth World Rally Championship crown by defeating Toyota team-mate Elfyn Evans to claim a fifth victory of the season in Chile.

Ogier, contesting a partial season, leapt ahead of Evans to lead the standings by two points despite sitting out three rallies this year. Ogier and co-driver Vincent Landais took the full 35 points by claiming the 10 on Super Sunday after coming through an intense head-to-head with Evans and Scott Martin to win by 11 seconds.

The 41-year-old's 66th win from 200 starts was also Toyota's 103rd success, eclipsing Citroen as the manufacturer with the most victories in WRC history.

"Many things have come together," said Ogier. "Vincent is doing a great job, always perfect. The team give me good tools to fight with, so thank you guys. Now we are number one, a record for Toyota more than deserved."

Ogier's rally started slowly – he admitted he'd got his set-up wrong for Friday morning's damp stages. After dropping as low as seventh,

he recovered to fourth at midday service. The damp conditions favoured those at the top of the road order as Kalle Rovanpera won the opening two tests to race into a 5.8s lead over Ott Tanak's Hyundai. But Rovanpera's victory hopes were dashed when he clipped a bank and knocked his left-rear tyre off the rim in stage three, costing the Toyota more than a minute.

Evans assumed a 0.5s lead over Tanak heading into Friday afternoon, but this was short-lived as Hyundai outlined its strength in the drying conditions. Tanak moved into a 6.9s lead after stage four, with that advantage growing to 9.7s, while team-mates Adrien Fourmaux and Thierry Neuville slotted into second and third.

The lead changed hands again after stage six when Tanak suffered engine failure, handing Fourmaux a 1s advantage over Neuville. Ogier, now more comfortable, notched up his first stage win to leap to third, only 2.3s adrift of the lead.

Heavy overnight rain made conditions treacherous on Saturday morning. This played

into the hands of Evans, who vaulted from fifth into the lead after stage nine, while Fourmaux and Neuville battled for traction on the polished roads.

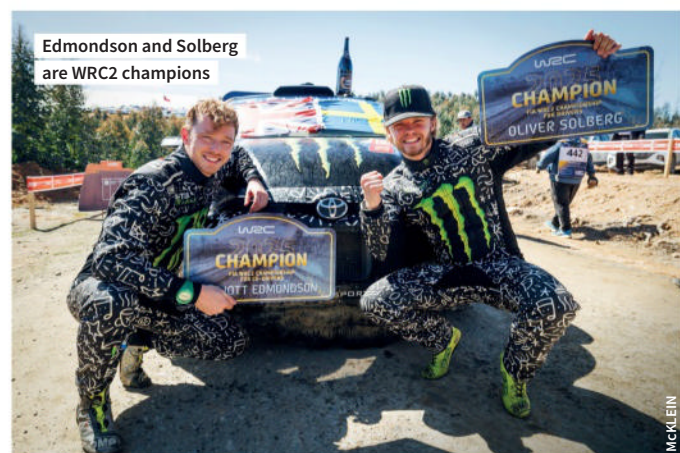
Hyundai's struggles continued when the stages dried out across the afternoon, with Fourmaux and Neuville slipping back from the victory fight. The afternoon belonged to Ogier: a clean sweep of stage wins lifted him ahead of Evans and into 6.3s lead heading into Sunday's final four stages.

Evans managed to win stage 14 of 16 to cut the deficit to 5.9s before Ogier responded to take 4.4s out of Evans on the penultimate test. Eager for Super Sunday points, Ogier continued to push to seal victory in style by claiming the Power Stage by 0.4s.

Fourmaux secured his third podium of the year, while Neuville came under pressure from the impressive Sami Pajari, who produced his best drive of the season so far to claim fifth for Toyota. Rovanpera salvaged sixth, his title bid suffering a blow. Tanak managed to seal one Super Sunday point despite being down on power. He is now 43 points behind Ogier.

Oliver Solberg and Elliott Edmondson sealed the WRC2 title after taking a fifth class win of the season, finishing ninth overall.

TOM HOWARD



Edmondson and Solberg are WRC2 champions

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Images and teaser video
show new Lancia rally
car testing in France

INSIDER

Lancia is poised to return after its Rally2 revealing, says Tom Howard

For diehard fans, the unveiling of a new Lancia rally car will always have the power to stir excitement given the Italian company's illustrious history in the sport. It conjures up images of past rally masters, beginning with the beautiful Fulvia, which was followed by the even more stunning Stratos that put the marque on the rally map, guiding it to three consecutive World Rally manufacturers' crowns. Then there was the 037 – the last two-wheel-drive car to win the world title in 1983 – before the monstrous S4 arrived at the end of the Group B era. Success continued with the Delta 4WD and Integrale, before factory involvement disappeared from the WRC scene in 1992.

Now it appears that Lancia's WRC history, which includes a record 10 manufacturer crowns, is set for a new chapter following the unveiling of the Ypsilon Rally2 HF Integrale that's likely to hit the WRC stages next year.

Since Lancia announced its return to rallying last year with its two-wheel-drive Ypsilon Rally4 car, speculation has been rife that this was merely a toe in the water, that something larger was on the horizon. The unveiling of the Rally2 version of the Ypsilon is proof of that.

A brief statement from the marque, and a teaser video on social media, has created plenty of intrigue concerning Lancia's plans. "The new Lancia Ypsilon Rally2 HF Integrale makes its debut, bringing the legendary spirit of Lancia's rally victories into today's motorsport and this is just the beginning," it reads.

The return of Lancia is part of a motorsport reshuffle within the Stellantis Group, which owns Alfa Romeo, Citroen, Fiat, Lancia, Maserati, Opel and Peugeot. Lancia is expected to take over the group's factory supported Rally2 programme currently backed by Citroen, which supports the PH Sport operation in fielding C3 Rally2 cars for brothers Yohan and Leo Rossel in WRC2. It has been announced that, from next year, Citroen will move its

support to Formula E, replacing Maserati, which exits the electric-racing scene. A formal launch and confirmation of Lancia's rally plans is expected soon.

This move into Rally2 is not the return of a full-factory WRC team akin to the days when Martini-liveried Deltas ruled the roost. It's easy to get carried away, but the news does represent a significant step in the direction of a full-fat comeback. The timing of the launch is in itself intriguing. Moving into the Rally2 sphere in 2026 is interesting given the WRC is preparing for a major shift in technical regulations due to be introduced in 2027, with next season the last for the current Rally1 machines.

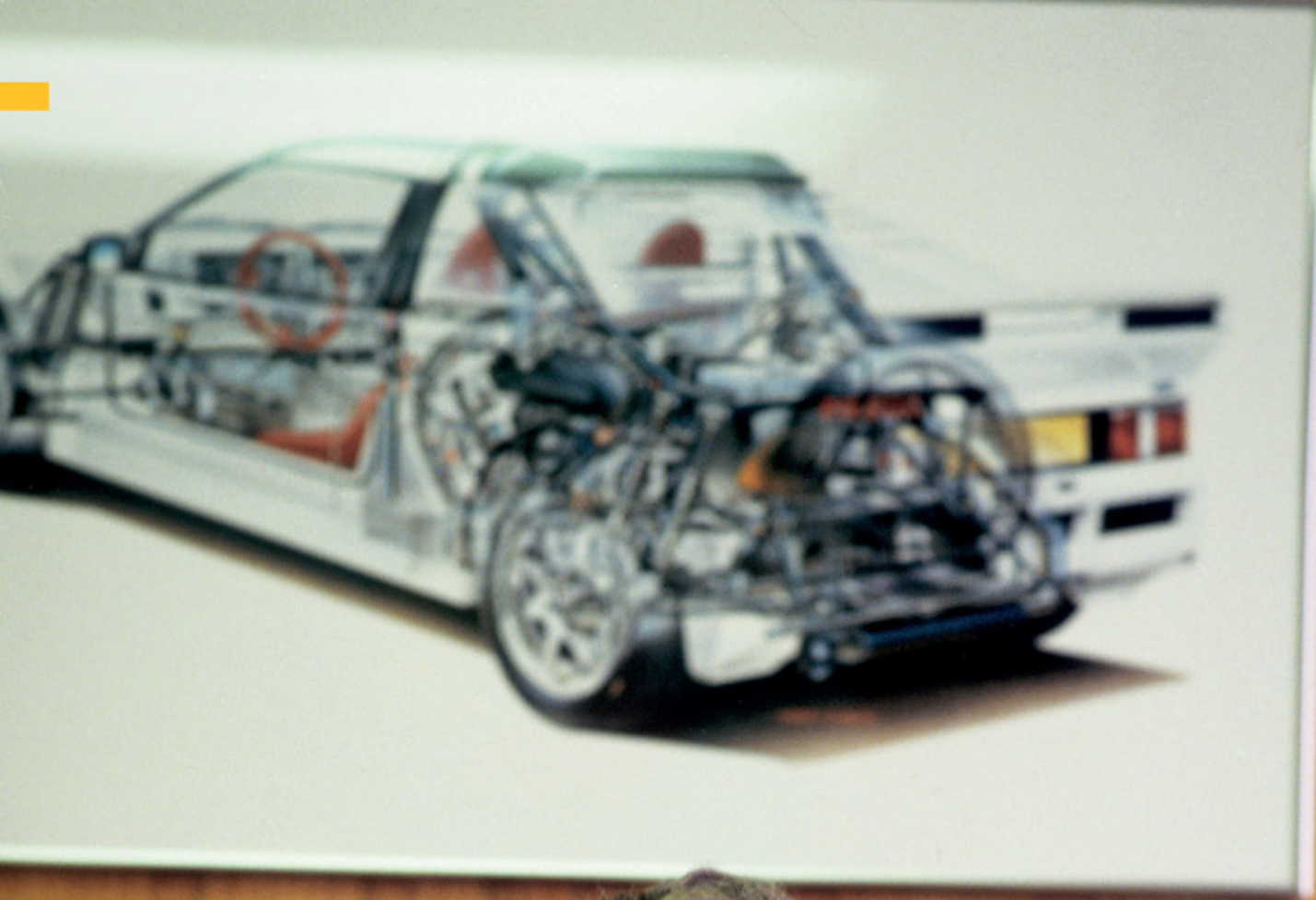
Under the new regulations, 'WRC27' cars will be built to a cost cap and deliver around 300bhp while using a spaceframe chassis and Rally2 componentry, including engines. From 2027, current Rally2 machinery will compete alongside WRC27 cars as the top class of the WRC. It begs the question that if Lancia is prepared to develop an Ypsilon Rally2 HF Integrale, why did it not wait and build a WRC27-spec car to the new rules?

There are a couple of factors to consider. Given it has

"The news does represent a significant step in the direction of a full-fat return"

the C3 Rally2 car platform to build on, it makes sense to use what's already in operation within the Stellantis fold. Developing a body and other components using the C3 platform is perhaps a more cost-effective way into the championship, which also prolongs the Rally2 model and has the ability to increase customer sales of the car.

But the prospect of Rally2 cars competing against the WRC27 machines in 2027 also presents current and prospective manufacturers with an interesting dilemma. In theory, Lancia could compete in this class of the WRC with its Ypsilon Rally2 HF Integrale, going up against the likes of Toyota, which has just surpassed Citroen to top the all-time WRC rally wins list. Is this the meaning behind the tantalising "this is just the beginning" statement, or is there even more to come? 🏆



REMEMBERING STUART TURNER

*We pay tribute to the passionate all-rounder
who changed motorsport for the better*

TOM HOWARD

For someone who stumbled into the motorsport world, Stuart Turner – who died aged 92 in early September – has left an indelible mark on the industry.

Turner was one of those rare individuals to have an infinite and enviable number of strings to their bow. Seemingly everything he touched turned to gold. A champion rally co-driver, a visionary, an architect of major motorsport campaigns, a PR genius, a successful team manager, a masterclass motivator, an unforgettable communicator, an after-dinner speaker blessed with sharp wit, an accomplished journalist/writer and prolific author, a passionate advocate of grassroots motorsport and improving safety. Incredibly, all of that was Stuart Turner in a nutshell. An accountant by profession who transformed into one of motorsport's most passionate all-rounders and influential figures.

"He had good success as a co-driver but for me the co-driving was nothing in relation to what he did afterwards," says FIA deputy president and M-Sport team founder Malcolm Wilson. "He was the guy you were always trying to impress. He just commanded so much respect and he could get the best out of people. His forward-thinking vision was unique and he was ahead of his time."

Distinguished motorsport broadcaster and rally driver Tony Jardine offers: "If you cut him in two like a piece of Blackpool rock, he had a motorsport core down the middle. The central bit would be rallying as that was his passion."

"He stands out as not just a figurehead but a master strategist and commander. At any level he could operate – whether it was talking to the board of major motor companies or talking to the mechanics, they all loved him. He worked with the best and kept big boards at Ford and BMC onside and kept delivering the goods. He strengthened motorsport and in particular he made Ford what it is today."

Turner will be forever associated with Ford, where he held the position of director of motorsport, overseeing its rallying operation and engine programme in Formula 1. It was a partnership that lasted from 1969 until his retirement in 1990. That was a far cry from Turner's chance encounter in motorsport that initially set the ball

rolling. In the mid-1950s, his exposure to motorsport was minimal until he was invited to attend a rally by his sister and her boyfriend, who were competing. When they became lost, Turner picked up the maps and from there a love of rallying formed. A career as a co-driver beckoned.

It led to Turner becoming a star in the road rallying scene before national glory arrived, becoming the first British rally champion, alongside Ron Gouldbourn, driving a Triumph TR3A in 1958. This title was followed up by another the following year aboard an Austin-Healey Sprite, calling notes for John Sprinzel.

Word soon spread of Turner's co-driving capabilities, which led to him competing on the international stage. Outings in Europe and Canada followed, although the most notable success was outright RAC International Rally of Great Britain victory in 1960, partnering Swedish sensation Erik Carlsson in a Saab 96.

Turner's adaptability was evident in his decision to make a career switch to journalism, taking up the sports editor position with *Motoring News*. Here, his love of rallying led to the creation of the much admired *Motoring News Rally Championship*.

"He stands out as not just a figurehead but a master strategist. He could operate at any level"

A return to the forefront of rallying followed when the British Motor Corporation appointed Turner as its competitions manager. Here he flourished, and made a name for himself in global motorsport. Decisions to revolutionise its rally programme were made, with only the famed Mini Cooper S and Austin-Healey 3000 avoiding the axe. It was a bold call but one that paid off.

Having forged a connection with drivers through his co-driving career, Turner's charismatic leadership enticed rally heroes Timo Makinen and Paddy Hopkirk to the fold. Success soon followed, with perhaps the most famous being Mini's giant-killing victory at the 1964 Monte Carlo Rally, led by Hopkirk.

Using all the knowledge gained as a journalist, he >>

managed to pull off a PR stunt – unimaginable today for rallying – to leverage this triumph to the maximum. The winning car and crew were transported from Monte Carlo to appear in front of a television audience of an estimated 22million on the BBC's *Sunday Night at the London Palladium*, hosted by Bruce Forsyth.

“Comedian Tommy Cooper was on the bill and then there's Paddy Hopkirk with the Mini at the end taking the accolades,” recalls Jardine. “Turner was so astute, and they moved heaven and earth to get that car there. The Mini was already doing well, but then sales went up even more after Monte Carlo and the London Palladium stunt.”

Turner's time at BMC came to end in 1968 when the company merged with British Leyland. Ford came calling, its then PR boss Walter Hayes offering Turner a role, which he declined since he felt it was ‘ungentlemanly’ given his allegiance to BMC. Instead, he became oil giant Castrol's deputy publicity manager. But the lure of Ford was too much to resist when it approached him again while he was working as a travelling marshal for the 1968 London-Sydney Marathon.

He wasted little time in seeking out opportunities for Ford to showcase itself in motorsport and sell more cars – the ‘win on Sunday, sell on Monday’ approach was in full swing. A masterstroke was to contest the 1970 London-Mexico World Cup Rally – a marathon 16,000-mile event. Ford entered a modified Escort Mk1, with Turner leading the focus on reliability. It was an inspired idea, and future World Rally champion Hannu Mikkola took Ford to victory. The result spawned a new road-going version of the car, the ‘Escort Mexico’, that flew out of the showrooms and is a cult classic today.

Ford quickly became synonymous with rallying and, in 1979, Turner oversaw Ford's first WRC manufacturers' and drivers' titles as Bjorn Waldegard pedalled the Escort RS1800 to glory. A second drivers' title would follow when Ari Vatanen and David Richards triumphed in the Rothmans-liveried Escort in 1981.

Alongside the rally programmes, Ford's Cosworth DFV

“He instilled the confidence in engineers and technicians to take the next step”

V8 was dominating the F1 world, though Turner wasn't a man to frequent grand prix paddocks. Rallying was his first love and he fought to persuade the top brass to ensure that Ford remained ever-present in the discipline despite difficult times.

“I would say he was instrumental in keeping Ford in rallying,” argues Jardine. “When questions were asked by management because things hadn't been going that well, he wrote a big document about why Ford should continue and what it should do. He didn't just do it from the heart, he had a plan. That plan was followed and he delivered world champions. He made the Blue Oval what it is and it's continued with the current Dakar programme and through M-Sport.”

There were, of course, big decisions to be made.

As Audi pioneered four-wheel drive with its Quattro at the dawn of the Group B era in the 1980s, Turner decided to cancel Ford's Escort RS1700T rally project and its C100 sportscar racing programme. The decision was made to develop the Ford RS200 Group B car, which unfortunately never realised its potential due to Group B ending prematurely in 1986. The Sierra Cosworth would become its successor.

“In my time he was Mr Ford,” explains Wilson. “I was doing RS1700T testing. There was no question the 1700T was becoming very good, and it was three seconds a mile quicker than the Mk2 Escort, but Stuart said no. He came with a clean sheet of paper and said we need to go four-wheel drive and then obviously the RS200 came. At the time it was really hard for me because I had a contract for 1983 in the WRC, and he came in and canned the whole thing, but on reflection it was the right thing to do.

“He instilled the confidence in engineers and technicians to take the next step. This is what he was very clever at. He would come up with the ideas, but then he would give the guys the confidence to embark on them.”

Wilson, who took over Ford's rallying operation through his own M-Sport company in 1997, also benefited from Turner's vision and desire to help the next generation: “He was one of those people that when he walked into a room you thought, ‘Right, I better pull myself together.’

“Ford used to do full-day rally forums and there is a picture of me when I was 14 years old attending one. Stuart was responsible for things like that. It was so educational, he just put so much into it. This was all his idea to promote the sport of rallying.”

Turner never really left motorsport, continuing to spread this passion at the grassroots level, offering his free time to countless motor clubs across the country. He was also a huge advocate for improving motorsport safety, becoming a key figure in the establishment of the Motorsport Safety Fund. The accolades also continued, with Turner receiving an Autosport award in 1990 and the Prince Michael Award of Merit in 2009.

“The fact that he supported so many motor clubs – one minute he would be doing a corporate after-dinner speech and then promising Suffolk Motor Club that he'd be there to give out prizes, and they would only pay his petrol – says everything about him,” recalls Jardine.

Turner would turn back to writing too, publishing more than 20 books, in which his sense of humour was ever-present, penning a Haynes manual for retirement of all things. This humour was a key part of his speeches' appeal.

“In every sphere that I saw him, whether that was listening to his speeches or working with Ford, he was just like any top co-driver,” Jardine smiles. “There were strategies, plans and details. He would have his wife sitting there with a stopwatch timing the gags and how long the laughs were. He would work out which were the better ones, rework the gag or drop them. He was brilliant. He was a riot.”

Turner will be remembered as an individual who was as committed to grassroots motorsport as he was about F1 and Ford winning in the WRC. A soul driven by pure, unadulterated passion. 🏆



In a Saab 96, Turner co-drove Carlsson to victory on 1960 RAC

LAT/GETTY IMAGES; ST/AF/GETTY IMAGES



1964 Monte-winning Mini was flown back to UK to appear before millions on TV



Mikkola's 1970 London-Mexico triumph was a marketing masterstroke

McKLEIN



Ford's first manufacturers' and drivers' crowns with Waldegard in 1979

McKLEIN



RS200 never got to fulfil its potential when Group B was canned

LAT/GETTY IMAGES



Blast off at Santa Pod

There was a double dose of spectacular drag racing action at Santa Pod during September as both the European and British championship campaigns drew to a close at the Northamptonshire venue. First up was the European showdown and Finland's Jere

Rantaniemi sealed the spoils for a second season in a row in his Chevrolet Camaro, defeating Estonia's Andres Arnover in the final. But it was still a successful year for Arnover (pictured on the right here facing up against Michel Tooren in the Euro semi-final) and

his turbocharged Ford Mustang as he wrapped up the British spoils a couple of weeks later. He had entered the deciding event with a comfortable points advantage among the Pro Mod machines and concluded the season with another victory over Tooren.



Photographer Callum Pudge/
Santa Pod

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Lloyd's recent frustrating run brought to an end by race-one victory



Osborne converted reversed-grid pole into maiden win at his 202nd attempt



BRITISH TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP

EMOTIONAL WINS FOR LLOYD AND OSBORNE STEAL THE SHOW

Such are the sporting regulations in the British Touring Car Championship that the series is well-stocked with cameo starring roles. And it was Dan Lloyd and Sam Osborne who stepped forward at Silverstone's penultimate round to bask in the limelight.

The other winner on the National Circuit was Tom Ingram who, as the highest starter using the soft tyre in race two, cruised through the pack from seventh on the grid for a comfortable victory. But, on the day, the Excelr8 Motorsport Hyundai i30 N Fastback pilot could only eke out his championship-leading advantage over Ash Sutton by a meagre point.

The successes for both Lloyd and Osborne opened the tear floodgates. Restart Racing, which only entered the series in 2024, moved heaven and earth to get Lloyd into one of its new Excelr8-provided Hyundais for this season alongside team prime mover Chris Smiley. The popular Huddersfield man is a quick pedaller – he took three wins with Excelr8 back in 2022 – but had endured a frustrating run since the summer break. High engine temperatures, which even forced a withdrawal from the final race of the Croft round in early August, were finally cured for Silverstone. And Lloyd did the rest.

The Hyundai went from fourth on the grid to the lead by the end of the second lap, and then Lloyd staved off an ever-present threat from the West Surrey Racing BMW 330i M Sport of outgoing champion Jake Hill. A lengthy safety car period, owing to Nic Hamilton's Cupra catching fire on the Wellington Straight, meant the race finished under caution. Lloyd reckoned he could have kept Hill at bay; the diminutive Kentishman thought he could have had a go; third-placed Gordon Shedden, who had briefly led before Lloyd came through, opined that, with a surfeit of TOCA Turbo Boost in the pocket, he could have mixed things up

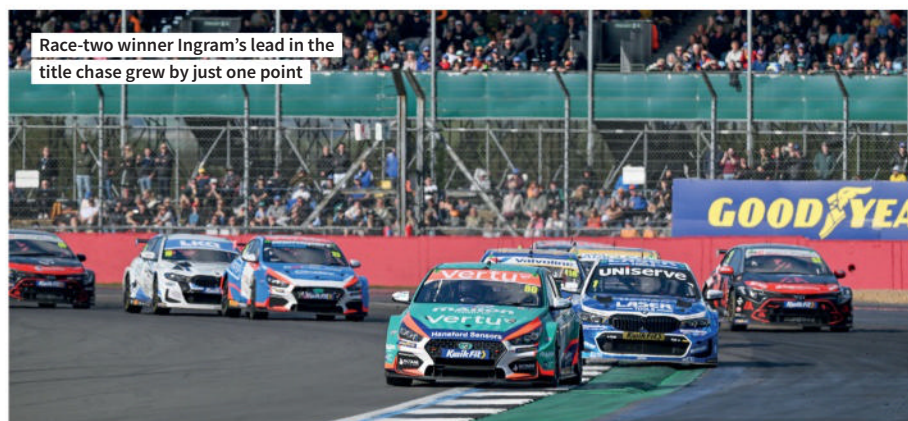
in his Speedworks Motorsport Toyota Corolla GR Sport.

Joy at Restart, then, over its maiden BTCC win. And more later in the day, when the team clinched the Independent teams' title. Commercial chief Pete Jones had been eyeing a top-three spot in the overall teams, but the squad now looks set for a still-impressive fourth.

Shedden's podium was no flash in the pan for the Toyotas. They were on form at Silverstone, with all three of Speedworks' experienced drivers now using the TOCA customer engine on a track where, traditionally, the Corolla has

Hamilton's blazing Cupra caused a lengthy safety car period in the opening race





shone. Recent Speedworks rearrival Josh Cook was fifth in that race, after a nerf from Senna Proctor at Becketts on the opening lap arguably cost him a podium shout. Aron Taylor-Smith used the soft tyres to nearly snatch third from Hill in race two. And Cook again featured in the finale by taking the fight to Osborne before settling for second place.

Osborne, the older son of Alliance Racing team owner Pete, has been vastly improved since ex-Speedworks battler Rory Butcher arrived in mid-2024 on coaching duties. He finished 12th in race two, before his NAPA-liveried Ford Focus ST was drawn on reversed-grid pole. And he was the only driver among the top 10 in the starting line-up to have a set of soft Goodyears to use...

Cook gave it his absolute best. The red-headed West Countryman, as well as being an ace racing driver, is also a skilled engineer, and all weekend had been throwing radical set-ups on the Toyota. "We're taking the opportunity, with me not really in a fight for anything, of going in a completely different direction on the car," he explained. "It's actually enjoyable; it's nice to explore different avenues." And again, for that finale, "we literally threw a set-up on that was unknown again". But the pursuit asked too much of his medium rubber, and Osborne snuck away over the final lap. Cue more emotion: a first-time win at his 202nd attempt.

With Silverstone's short lap and long straights, Osborne's title-chasing team-mate Sutton and rival Ingram were always going to struggle owing to their TTB restrictions under the series' sporting regulations. Ingram qualified 14th (his previous lowest in 2025 was fourth) with Sutton just two places ahead. On medium tyres, they ran in tandem in the opening race to seventh (Ingram) and eighth (Sutton), after the Hyundai got the jump when the Ford got embroiled with Charles Rainford's WSR BMW.

Sutton's masterstroke was using the medium tyre again in race two when Ingram went soft.

He fought through to second ahead of Hill, the position he reckoned he would have taken had he matched Ingram's strategy – but now with a set of softs available for the finale. "They [Excelr8] just seemed to have such good performance in the car, if I'd finished second on the soft we would have wasted it," reckoned Sutton, who had overruled his team on the decision. "Luckily we got to second and it paid off. To pull that amount of places was great and meant we had an ace up our sleeve for the last one."

"Our gameplan was to seize big points, grab them, especially with us being on a large amount of boost," summed up Ingram. "But it was important – if we're doing softs, we have to win this, there's no other option."

Sutton fought from 11th to third on the soft tyres in the finale. But his inability to make inroads from there towards Osborne and Cook shines a light on his first-time-winning team-mate's performance – although, admittedly, Sutton faced a TTB handicap. Ingram got into a "rather stressful" battle with Hill and the Alliance Ford of Dan Rowbottom, all while monitoring Sutton's progress. In the end he had to make do with fifth spot behind the 'Laser Beemer'.

Hill was highly satisfied with his day, which netted him a trio of top-four finishes on a weekend when the BMW continued to show its strong late-season form. Young team-mate Daryl DeLeon earned his first BTCC pole in a wet Q3 shootout and was also quick in the dry, but his Sunday went wrong with flat-spotted tyres in the opener and a driveshaft failure sidelining him from the start of race three. Rainford and Aiden Moffat also showed pace.

Those results propelled Hill right into the mix for third in the championship, after a weekend of disasters for the 'NAPA Dans' Cammish and Rowbottom. Out of this title fight Hill may have been, but the potential was there to mix things up at the Brands GP finale...

MARCUS SIMMONS

RESULTS ROUND 9/10

RACE 1

- Dan Lloyd**
Hyundai i30 N Fastback
(Restart Racing)
25 laps in 27m10.741s
- Jake Hill**
BMW 330i M Sport
(West Surrey Racing)
+0.519s
- Gordon Shedden**
Toyota Corolla GR Sport
(Speedworks Motorsport)
+1.367s
- Senna Proctor**
Hyundai i30 N Fastback
(Excelr8 Motorsport)
+1.701s
- Josh Cook**
Toyota Corolla GR Sport
(Speedworks Motorsport)
+2.389s

RACE 2

- Tom Ingram**
Hyundai i30 N Fastback
(Excelr8 Motorsport)
25 laps in 25m44.248s
- Ash Sutton**
Ford Focus ST
(Alliance Racing)
+2.875s
- Jake Hill**
BMW 330i M Sport
(West Surrey Racing)
+4.654s
- Aron Taylor-Smith**
Toyota Corolla GR Sport
(Speedworks Motorsport)
+4.829s
- Charles Rainford**
BMW 330i M Sport
(West Surrey Racing)
+6.280s

RACE 3

- Sam Osborne**
Ford Focus ST
(Alliance Racing)
22 laps in 21m17.419s
- Josh Cook**
Toyota Corolla GR Sport
(Speedworks Motorsport)
+1.609s
- Ash Sutton**
Ford Focus ST
(Alliance Racing)
+4.463s
- Jake Hill**
BMW 330i M Sport
(West Surrey Racing)
+9.543s
- Tom Ingram**
Hyundai i30 N Fastback
(Excelr8 Motorsport)
+10.065s

POINTS 1 Ingram 419; 2 Sutton 386; 3 Dan Cammish 275.



BRITISH TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP

INGRAM GETS TITLE-WINNING JOB DONE WITH A RACE IN HAND

Whatever the variables of the sporting regulations, the British Touring Car Championship can't always be resolved with a final-race thriller. Tom Ingram closed the door on 2025 with a barely noticed run to sixth place in the reversed-grid finale, his Excelr8 Motorsport Hyundai i30 N Fastback part of a close-at-the-flag trio with team-mate Adam Morgan and the West Surrey Racing BMW of Aiden Moffat, which narrowly pipped the two South Korean machines.

The job of winning the championship had

been completed earlier. Such has been the all-round brilliance this year of Ingram, his car and his team, that a cruise on soft tyres to his seventh BTCC win of the season in race two was enough. All the astonishing racecraft of Ash Sutton and strategy nous of the Alliance Racing-run NAPA operation that fields the Ford Focus STs could do was keep things at least simmering until the finish of race 29 of 30.

It was kind of appropriate that Ingram's title-clinching drive should come in a race where Sutton finished second. That at least allowed a

glimmer of hope – among those to whom these things are important – that events could be postponed to a final-race showdown, especially when a couple of safety car periods pushed the Focus into apparent contention. But Sutton was on medium tyres, saving his soft rubber for the finale. "This has been our argument all year," he explained. "We've been always offset on the tyres because we can't race them on the same tyre, we haven't got that performance. For us to take it to Tom on the same tyre, they've just got the engine performance to outpace us."

Ingram will no doubt chortle at that remark. The Swindon-prepared Hyundai powerplant is strong, as evidenced by his cruise away from Sutton to victory when the green flags flew. But so is the car's mid-to-exit corner speed, which brings pace onto the straights. And its fastback aero allows the Hyundai to just keep on accelerating where its boxy rivals stall.

Tyres had also been a Sutton mantra on Saturday when, effectively, this title race was done and dusted. Ingram transferred to Q2 on his one second per lap of TOCA Turbo Boost, so too did Sutton on his three. In the second phase of qualifying, late improvements from Sutton's team-mates Dan Cammish and Dan Rowbottom were among those that relegated Ingram to

Cammish's race-one win, then fifth in R2, sealed third place in points standings





Cook's fightback from qualifying woe culminated in race-three win

seventh, and out of the pole shootout. It was disappointing for him, but he was only 0.126 seconds off table-topper Daryl DeLeon. "We could have got into Q3, but I don't think we would have gone any faster than we did," he surmised. "Seventh was about our pace today."

Sutton, however, was over 0.7s adrift of Ingram, down in 11th, saying that it felt like he'd put on a set of hard tyres. Once everything had been looked into, he knew there was nothing wrong with those Goodyears. "It was just an internal issue we messed up with," he smiled ruefully. "Put the wrong wind in, shall we say..."

That was compounded when the lack of proper running in Q2 and any at all in Q3 left Sutton playing catch-up on set-up. All he could do in race one was fend off the Restart Racing Hyundai of Chris Smiley for ninth place. Ingram had a calm, untroubled run to fifth, and then unleashed the Hyundai's explosive pace on the softs in race two. When the field wasn't trundling around behind the safety car, nothing could match him. Champion again.

Away from the overall title fight, other things needed resolving. Jake Hill's late-season run in the West Surrey Racing BMW 330i M Sport had brought him into contention to nab Cammish's third place in the points, with Rowbottom also in the mix. This was something Hill dearly wanted to do, especially in light of his departure from the BTCC for 2026 to the world of international sportscar racing. But a first-lap rubbing match with Morgan – "I can't blame Adam for it, I'd have done the same thing" – ripped a valve out of the left-front tyre, putting Hill to the back after a pitstop and striking a hammerblow to his hopes.

Cammish had been promoted to effective poleman, his qualifying form again superb on 5s per lap of TTB, when DeLeon pulled in at the end of the formation lap with engine problems. And from there he kept the Excelr8 Hyundais of

Tom Chilton and Morgan at arm's length to make a giant stride away from Hill in the points. His fifth place in race two on the medium tyres, to the seventh of Hill, wrapped up third position in the standings.

That's just as well, because Cammish was shoved onto the grass on the run up Hailwood Hill early in the finale by the sister car of Rowbottom, and slewed across the track and into retirement in the run-off at the Druids hairpin with broken left-front suspension. This cost the team the coveted manufacturer/constructor title and, well, served merely to heighten speculation that Rowbottom is off to pastures new for 2026... At least the boys in yellow-and-blue narrowly secured the teams' crown over the Excelr8-run Team Vertu.

As this happened, Josh Cook was lining up to take his Speedworks Motorsport Toyota Corolla GR Sport past Moffat for the race lead, which he achieved just before the safety car boards were brandished. The West Countryman only rejoined Speedworks in time for the last three rounds, but his arrival and the switch to TOCA customer engines has produced a resounding upsurge in form, evidenced by a pair of fourth places for a rejuvenated Gordon Shedden.

Cook suffered oil pressure problems in qualifying that dumped him to the back of the starting line-up, but climbed the field through races one and two to get onto the front row of the reversed grid – with a set of soft tyres. Following the safety car, Sutton also got past Moffat – as, ultimately, did Hill. But Cook had enough TTB in his pocket to not have to put everything on the line to fend off his old chum to the flag.

Sutton was philosophical about losing that battle, and his war against Ingram. "Credit to them, they've done an absolutely sterling job," he nodded. "It's just they were a bit unbeatable this year."

MARCUS SIMMONS

RESULTS ROUND 10/10

RACE 1

- Dan Cammish**
Ford Focus ST
(Alliance Racing)
15 laps in 22m52.149s
- Tom Chilton**
Hyundai i30 N Fastback
(Excelr8 Motorsport)
+1.260s
- Adam Morgan**
Hyundai i30 N Fastback
(Excelr8 Motorsport)
+1.390s
- Charles Rainford**
BMW 330i M Sport
(West Surrey Racing)
+2.850s
- Tom Ingram**
Hyundai i30 N Fastback
(Excelr8 Motorsport)
+6.790s

RACE 2

- Tom Ingram**
Hyundai i30 N Fastback
(Excelr8 Motorsport)
18 laps in 30m53.730s
- Ash Sutton**
Ford Focus ST
(Alliance Racing)
+3.387s
- Senna Proctor**
Hyundai i30 N Fastback
(Excelr8 Motorsport)
+5.016s
- Gordon Shedden**
Toyota Corolla GR Sport
(Speedworks Motorsport)
+7.700s
- Dan Cammish**
Ford Focus ST
(Alliance Racing)
+8.890s

RACE 3

- Josh Cook**
Toyota Corolla GR Sport
(Speedworks Motorsport)
18 laps in 29m07.334s
- Ash Sutton**
Ford Focus ST
(Alliance Racing)
+1.043s
- Jake Hill**
BMW 330i M Sport
(West Surrey Racing)
+2.834s
- Gordon Shedden**
Toyota Corolla GR Sport
(Speedworks Motorsport)
+13.542s
- Aiden Moffat**
BMW 330i M Sport
(West Surrey Racing)
+14.750s

POINTS 1 Ingram 462; 2 Sutton 428; 3 Cammish 307.



JEP

BTCC

Plato plots BTCC comeback

The two-time champion is set to return to the series as a team owner next year, and plans to field a pair of new cars

MARCUS SIMMONS

The British Touring Car Championship's wins record holder is back in the series for 2026, although it won't be behind the steering wheel. Two-time champion Jason Plato is instead at the helm of a two-car team, three years after he bowed out of the series with 97 victories to his credit.

Plato, who turns 58 as this magazine hits the shelves, was giving no details away about Jason Plato Motorsport when he met with media at the penultimate round of the 2025 series at Silverstone. "I can't tell you a great deal but I'm now a team owner, and will be on the grid next year with two cars," he

said. "We're quite a bit down the road. From the floor upwards we will have the best in the business, and there will be people out there who will be really upset.

"Everything sits under me. I won't get involved in the day-to-day running of it. I'll be running the marketing department and bringing in the money. I'm as well

known for that element as I am for what I've done in the car."

Nevertheless, the BTCC grapevine has been humming with speculation about the project. It is widely believed that Plato is bringing Mercedes back to the series for the first time since Ciceley Motorsport shelved its A-Class contenders at the end of 2020, and that top motorsport engineering company RML is building the cars. RML, of course, ran Laurent Aiello's Nissan Primera to the title in 1999, as well as Plato's victorious campaign in 2010 with the Chevrolet Cruze.

RML also supplies the BTCC's spec subframes and suspension, so cannot be involved in the running of the team. Founder Ray Mallock's son Michael, an RML director, could only say: "I know what he's up to, and it's good to see his announcement. We support lots of people with lots of stuff and supply parts for the BTCC, so we would obviously be supplying that team. As for anything else, I don't know."

Dan Rowbottom, who is a friend of Plato's and has worked with him on the YouTube *The Scenic Route* series, is said to now be taking his Cataclean backing to JPM. He played down the speculation, but is expected to depart Alliance Racing, with which he was fifth in the points this season.

Alliance team manager Malcolm Swetnam, who was absent from the recent Brands finale, is linked with the project, while leading engineer Simon Cumberpatch, who worked with Plato for several years at Triple Eight and was most recently at One Motorsport, is also tipped for a role.

BTCC boss Alan Gow made it clear to Autosport that he does not plan to expand the grid beyond the current 24 cars, and that the team will need to acquire two of the existing TBL entrants' licences. Plato, who went through struggles following the end of his racing career and the collapse of his marriage, plans to highlight men's mental health with the exercise.



JEP



The 2024 BTCC champion is heading for pastures new

BTCC

HILL DEPARTS BTCC IN SPORTSCAR MOVE

Outgoing British Touring Car title holder Jake Hill is off to the world of international sportscar racing for 2026.

The 31-year-old is understood to have not yet signed a deal, but stars were sufficiently aligned for a farewell announcement before the Brands Hatch BTCC finale. Not only is Hill relinquishing his seat at the West Surrey Racing BMW team, but he is also parting company with Mark Blundell's MB management group, which played a large role in providing the commercial back-up to establish him as a BTCC top-liner.

Hill is taking advantage of a change in the FIA driver grading scheme – he was the first to take a maiden BTCC title since the governing body stopped giving national tin-top champions a gold grading. His silver status has made him attractive to teams, one of which is known to be Era Motorsport, with which he has contested Creventic's 24H Series this year in a Ferrari 296 GT3 as



Hill has raced a Ferrari with Era in 24H Series this year

well as represented in historic.

Speculation suggests an Era programme could encompass GT3 in Europe as well as its LMP2 activity in the IMSA SportsCar Championship. It is understood that Hill also has other options.

"I've always had this itch to do other stuff," said Hill. "I always saw myself trying to do Le Mans, Daytona, Nurburgring 24 – all these cool, exciting races abroad. I just feel now is the right time.

"I've got an incredible opportunity to do some of those races, and just try and explore a little bit abroad. By all means

this isn't forever with the BTCC.

I do genuinely hope I get to come back, but I will never forgive myself if I don't go and try."

Hill's departure leaves WSR without its most recent overall champion. The team's 2025 Jack Sears title winner Daryl DeLeon is in the Porsche GB Junior final (see p120), Charles Rainford is seeking a budget to remain, and Aiden Moffat's form is much improved. WSR is also working on commercial deals for Colin Turkington and 2024 cameo star Bobby Thompson.

MARCUS SIMMONS

AUDI BACK IN BTCC WITH POWER MAXED

The Audi marque is back in the British Touring Car Championship for 2026 thanks to a new project with Power Maxed Racing.

PMR, which lost its Vauxhall Astras in August in a devastating fire and completed the season with loaned Cupra Leons, has already begun work on bringing the Audi S3 saloon to the series.

"There are two or three cars that are the most aerodynamic really, and one of our other options [Mercedes], Mr Jason Plato's currently building..." explained PMR boss Adam Weaver. "Audi was the other one that we liked. We've got a relationship with TPS, who supply all the aftermarket parts, because of racing things like VW Cup over the years and TCR, so we've got some connection there.

"And then we've got a couple of sponsors that we've picked up like Awesome that are on the car – they supply all the aftermarket upgrades for VW Group. I've known them for a long, long time, but we couldn't put them on the car because we ran a Vauxhall.

"As soon as we ran a Cupra [part of the same automotive group] they jumped on board with us, and we can get them to become a bit more of a partner for the team."

Audis last made an appearance in the series back in 2020 when the AmD squad ran a pair of S3s.

MARCUS SIMMONS





Wallis's two years as Junior are now up and the search is on for his replacement

CARRERA CUP GB

PORSCHE SELECTS ITS GB JUNIOR FINALISTS

British Touring Car race winner Daryl DeLeon, 2023 GB3 champion Callum Voisin, Porsche Sprint Challenge GB frontrunner Samuel Harvey and Dutch Porsche Cayman racer Joep Breedveld have been selected as the finalists battling to become the next Porsche Carrera Cup GB Junior.

The quartet will face a Silverstone shootout next month to determine who will follow in the footsteps of James Wallis and become the next Junior. The chosen one will receive £85,000 towards their budget across each of the next two seasons as well as a wealth of support and opportunities from Porsche.

Although DeLeon, 20, has spent the past two and a half seasons racing in the BTCC, he has prior sportscar and Porsche experience. He was a Radical frontrunner in 2023, and also raced the previous generation Carrera Cup car in the British Endurance Championship that year, being one of four Team Hard drivers to share the crown.

"It's an amazing opportunity for any young driver and I thought I'd go for it," said DeLeon. "Sportscars is

something I've always had my eye on from Radicals and racing the old Porsche Cup car. I feel like I've developed some good skill in the rear-wheel drive."

Voisin, meanwhile, heads into the shootout after a "frustrating" sophomore campaign in FIA Formula 3. He was a race winner last year but only scored one further podium this season en route to 14th in the table and is now seeking a fresh challenge.

"I did my best through GB3 and F3 but didn't really have the funds to go further up – it's a good time to move on," said

Voisin, 19. "The Porsche Junior scholarship was definitely very appealing to me – I'm excited and preparation is under way!"

Former Ginetta racer Harvey, 20, first entered the Porsche pyramid last year in the Sprint Challenge, progressing to the top RS Pro division for 2025. He scored two wins and finished fourth in the standings. Another driver with Cayman pedigree is 18-year-old Breedveld, who has been competing in the Porsche Sports Cup Deutschland series following karting success.

STEPHEN LICKORISH



MSV



GB3

GB3 GETS CAR TWEAKS AND FRESH TRACKS

GB3 will feature an upgraded car in 2026, with the changes largely well-received among teams as the tweaked machine made its first public appearance ahead of Donington Park's recent round.

A heavily revised engine, as well as chassis and bodywork changes, will be introduced with the aim of improving both performance and reliability after several teams experienced teething troubles with the new Tatuus MSV GB3-025 this season.

The alterations coincide with Formula Regional, which sits on the same step of the single-seater ladder, introducing a second-generation car for 2026.

"The changes are only going to improve on what we've got," said Hillspeed boss Richard Ollerenshaw. "We've probably got the best package that's available globally for drivers that want to progress to FIA F3."

Hitech's Phil Blow, meanwhile, was cautiously optimistic: "The engine side will be fantastic, but with aero you don't know what difference that's going to make. If they achieve what they say they are going to, then that is really going to be a good car."

GB3 will race at Barcelona and Red Bull Ring for the first time next year, while Zandvoort and Monza are not on the 2026 calendar. The series therefore keeps a 50:50 balance between European and UK events.

STEVE WHITFIELD

New BTCC support series will feature bespoke rear-wheel-drive car from Power Maxed



TOCA

POWER MAXED TO RUN NEW JUNIOR SERIES

Plans for a new junior category to support the British Touring Car Championship from 2027 have been revealed, which will feature a rear-wheel-drive car developed by Power Maxed Racing.

The bespoke car will be designed by long-time PMR technical director Martin Broadhurst in partnership with PMR engineers and is set to feature a sequential gearbox. PMR chief Adam Weaver said the machine's exact specification

is still being determined and that it could be powered either by a naturally aspirated engine or "it may well be a low-litreage 1.2 or 1.4 turbo".

"Having been closely involved in all levels of British motorsport, we know what is needed for a successful junior programme and PMR obviously possess the high-level of design and engineering expertise to build an outstanding car," Weaver added. "It would be nice to have a car on display three or four rounds into the BTCC next year."

The category will be run by sister operation Power Maxed Motorsport and follows unsuccessful attempts to launch an unrelated junior series on the BTCC undercard this year. The

TOCA Junior Championship was also due to feature a bespoke rear-wheel-drive racer and was masterminded by Junior Saloons boss Dave Beecroft.

However, amid a lack of interest from drivers and teams in the Chevron B1417 machine, the category's launch was postponed until 2026. Then in July it was revealed that BTCC organiser TOCA had ended its association with Beecroft. At the time, BTCC chief executive Alan Gow said he would evaluate alternative proposals for a new championship and has now selected to go with the PMR-spearheaded option.

"We are pleased to announce the introduction of a dedicated junior championship within the BTCC package, commencing in 2027," said Gow. "Having received expressions of interest, it was clear that Power Maxed Racing were best placed to independently develop, build and supply the bespoke car for this exciting new championship."

"We remain committed to creating the ideal and highest profile stepping stone for emerging talent and supporting the UK's legacy of producing top-level racing drivers."

MARCUS SIMMONS & STEPHEN LICKORISH

There's not been a junior series on the TOCA bill since Ginetta Junior in 2022



BRICKLEY SNATCHES TCR EUROPE TITLE

Jenson Brickley has claimed this year's TCR Europe title, having vaulted from fourth in the points ahead of the Barcelona finale to be crowned in dramatic style.

Brickley, who won junior and senior Fiesta titles before switching to TCR machinery, began competing in Europe last year when he was runner-up in TCR Spain as a privateer.

"We beat the virtually works-backed SEAT team, Monlau Motorsport, in their own country and then they wanted me to drive for them," explained Cupra pilot Brickley (below). "It was more relaxed and let me focus on my racing. Last year I had to help mechanic the car and drove the truck to and from the races."

After winning at the Algarve opener, punctures caused a pair of retirements at Spa that threatened to derail his title bid.

"It was like pressing the reset button and I still thought we could feature, but as an outsider for the title," he said. "We went to Barcelona, no pressure, kept calm and we did the job."

His second and fourth-placed finishes in Catalunya made him the champion by one point from Teddy Claret's Audi. But there was more drama to come.

"We were celebrating when we heard that one of the drivers had been given a post-race penalty, which put us level on points," he explained. "So the title was decided on a tie break – we both had two wins, but I had three seconds to his one."

PETER SCHERER





HISTORICS

SILVERSTONE TO STILL HOST HISTORIC EVENT

Silverstone will host a major historic racing event in 2026, to be called the BRDC Classic.

The contract for Nick Wigley's Goose organisation to promote the Silverstone Festival came to an end after August's 2025 event and the slot will now be taken by CarFest, which will not include circuit racing.

This news led to rumours that there would no longer be a major historic racing extravaganza at the home of the British Grand Prix, but the BRDC Classic will take place on 24-26 July and is on the Motor Racing Legends, Masters Historic Racing and Historic Sports Car Club calendars for 2026.

"We're very excited to announce that, with the Festival becoming CarFest – which we are proud to have and looking forward to developing – we are going to move the historic racing content to the traditional Silverstone Classic weekend at the end of July," said circuit managing director Stuart Pringle.

"It's second only to the British GP in terms of car events at

Silverstone and one of the most prestigious events on the calendar. We're committed to developing it and excited to put the focus back on the racing."

Pringle confirmed that it will feature familiar series and "some of the most popular and high-profile races", though the full programme has yet to be confirmed.

The British Racing Drivers' Club, which owns Silverstone, will play a more prominent role beyond giving its name to the event that was known as the Silverstone Classic until 2023. "The club will be awarding

some of its historic trophies for key races," added Pringle.

Historic racing ace Gary Pearson, who won both the RAC Historic Tourist Trophy and RAC Woodcote Trophy with brother John at this year's Festival, welcomed the move back to the Classic's traditional date.

"It works nicely because August is quite close to the Goodwood Revival for us," he said. "Silverstone has been one of the biggest events for a long time. Nick Wigley [event director] has done a fantastic job of making it what it is."

KEVIN TURNER



STEVE JONES



BARC

TCR, PICKUPS PART OF 2026 TRUCKS BILL

TCR UK is set to race alongside the British Truck Racing Championship at several of its events next year.

Following the Easter Brands Hatch opener, the categories will unite for rounds at Snetterton and Donington Park. TCR UK will skip the Thruxton and Pembrey BTRC meetings, instead visiting Croft and supporting British GT at Donington. Its Maximum Motorsport-run sister series, Civic Cup and the relaunched non-championship VAG Trophy, will however remain on the Truck bill for those events.

All three Maximum categories will then take in a standalone round at Oulton Park in October before the Brands season finale.

"We're creating this package that is viable financially for the competitor, but also it's commercially viable – big crowds and a decent TV package," said Maximum's Stewart Lines.

Also joining the British Truck bill will be Pickups, which return to the British Automobile Racing Club after a year with MotorSport Vision Racing. BTRC promoter Truck Sport will take on the category's management and promotion as founder Sonny Howard looks to secure its long-term future. "We're good at running events but they're very good at the commercial side of it," said Howard, "so it seemed a logical decision."

MARK PAULSON

CTCRC's broad range of retro tin-tops will feature at northern and southern 'Rewind' festivals



CTCRC

TWO TOURING CAR FESTIVALS NEXT YEAR

Two new retro-themed touring car festivals will take place in Britain next year, with north and south editions of Touring Car Rewind being held at Oulton Park and Brands Hatch.

Circuit owner MotorSport Vision has teamed up with the Classic Touring Car Racing Club to promote the race meetings on 16 May and 1-2 August 2026. They will build on MSV's successful Super Touring Power events, staged at Brands for the past three years, while

expanding the focus to a broader spectrum of touring car racing.

"It's become more and more apparent that we were swaying towards all touring cars, not just Super Tourers, and we wanted something to reflect that," explained CTCRC chairman Stuart Caie, who confirmed that the club's Super Tourers series, for iconic cars from the 1990s, will race at both events.

The CTCRC's seven other categories will also be in action at each circuit. They range from Pre-'66 Touring Cars to Group A machinery of the 1980s and the outrageously modified cars that contest its Classic and Historic Thunder categories.

"There have been countless calls for us to bring the show to

another part of the country," added Caie. "I liked the old Leeds and Reading [music] festivals, I like the idea of doing north and south, so that's what we've done."

Other popular elements of Super Touring Power are expected to feature at the new events, including demonstrations, off-track displays and appearances from star drivers of the past.

MSV's David Willey said: "The passion from fans and competitors for classic touring car racing is undeniable. The success of our Super Touring Power events illustrated that perfectly, but if there was ever a complaint it was simply there should be one in the north too!"

The two meetings form part of the CTCRC's calendar, which will kick off at Donington Park on 21-22 March. A trip to Cadwell Park and June's Thruxton Retro festival also feature, before the season concludes at Snetterton and Silverstone.

The club has also been linked to a guest slot on the support bill of a major championship following its successful appearance alongside British Touring Cars at Croft last year.

MARK PAULSON

Super Tourers will still feature, just no longer as headline act



TEAM BRIT TO RUN GT3 BMW IN GT CUP

Team Brit, which provides race opportunities for disabled drivers, will enter the GT3 ranks for the first time next year. The team recently celebrated its 10th birthday and will now field a BMW M4 GT3 (above) in the 2026 GT Cup that will be driven by Jamie Falvey and Paul Fullick.

JCW FACELIFT AND TOCA MINI CARNIVAL

The JCW class of the Mini Challenge will feature a facelifted upgrade package next season that will mirror the F66 Minis currently on sale. Both the JCW and Cooper series will appear at a British Touring Car event for the first time at a special Mini Carnival at Snetterton in May.

GIBSON TAKES ON NEW LEGENDS ROLE

Two-time Legends champion Will Gibson will take over from Simon Belcher as the category's commercial director. Belcher is stepping away after 15 years in the role to focus on his jet ski racing, while Gibson will no longer compete in the series.

BARWELL CREATES HERITAGE DIVISION

Barwell Motorsport is creating a Heritage division in 2026 to mark 20 years since the launch of GT3. The outfit will enter GT3 Legends and the new GT3 Revival Series. It will field a British GT title-winning BMW Z4, and also specialise in running Audi R8s and Lamborghini Gallardos.

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GARY HAWKINS

ECR

NEW EQUIPE NATIONAL CATEGORY

A new national historic racing championship is being launched by Equipe Classic Racing for next season that will incorporate a variety of pre-1966 GTs and tin-tops.

The organiser has previously only operated series but believes the time is right to create a top-tier championship to cater for more ambitious historic racers. The Equipe Historic Championship will feature a multi-class structure with six divisions based upon engine size, and the overall champion can come from any of these.

The category will be open to one or two-driver teams and there will be seven hour-long races across the year, at venues including the

Silverstone and Brands Hatch Grand Prix circuits.

"As the historic world has got more competitive and got bigger, I just felt there was a cohort of people that were possibly looking for something they can really get behind and offer a category with a real competitive element," explained Equipe partner Rob Cull.

"There's two types of driver: the people who love the cars and racing; and the historic driver who wants to go flat-out and win everything. They're two distinct characters and I think there wasn't a place for that second character to go."

Equipe's existing historic categories do not accept entries from pro drivers, but Cull said the new championship will be open to the "whole historic community".

"I felt the timing was right at the beginning of last year to start exploring

what it would take," he added.

"We've had a huge amount of support from Motorsport UK. They've never had a national historic championship – they've got it in rallying but never in circuit racing. We're chuffed to bits they trust us."

Cull said he had drawn inspiration from the British Saloon Car Championship in the 1980s to devise the class-based points-scoring system, which is already proving popular.

"It will be very fair and give everybody the same chance [to win overall], no matter what car they have or how big their budget is," he said. "You should have an equal chance if you're in an MGB or TVR as if you're in a Cobra, E-type or Elan."

He has also been encouraged by the amount of initial interest in the championship, with 20 drivers already pledging to enter within the first week of the concept being announced.

STEPHEN LICKORISH



STEVE JONES

JENKINS FAMILY TO RUN MIGHTY MINIS

Father-and-son racers John and James Jenkins have taken control of the long-running Mighty Minis championship from its founder Rodger Tello and are seeking to "re-energise" the category.

The series was formed in 1996 but for this year the decision was taken to merge the old Super Mighty and Mighty divisions into a single class with a revised 1293cc engine. However, not all preparers were in favour of the move and a rival Classic Mini Racing series has now been created.

With Tello looking to step back, the Jenkins family will now take the reins and wants the championship to remain true to its affordable roots, which is considered a perfect fit with the administering 750 Motor Club's ethos.

"We really want to carry on Rodger's legacy and carry on the affordable nature," said Jenkins Jr, who finished runner-up in his first season racing in the series in 2022, with his father (pictured) joining in a couple of years later. "The regulations Rodger changed to, they would be set in stone."

"We're looking at the times of the races and having lower entry fees. There are a few other ideas in the pipeline and we've got three or four new drivers looking to join us. We're also building two or three cars that will be ready for people to buy and we've got a new website as well."

STEPHEN LICKORISH

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RYAN AUTOSPORT NATIONAL RANKINGS

MOORE CHANGE TOWARDS THE TOP BUT BRAY EXTENDS LEAD

The table to the right may seem distinctly familiar. Despite a busy five weeks, featuring 29 race events and hundreds of individual contests, nine of the top 10 drivers in the Ryan Motorsport Insurance Autosport National Rankings have retained a place in the table from last month. However, the order they appear in is very different.

Yes, Ali Bray continues to lead – as he has done virtually all season. In fact, Bray's command of first place looks increasingly assured as he has extended his advantage to five wins after another Mazda MX-5 hat-trick at Croft. Monoposto ace George Line also remains his closest rival despite not adding to his tally in the past month.

But, below them, the order has shuffled significantly. Formula Ford 1600 star Jason Smyth is up to third after bagging a brace at Brands Hatch. But Smyth could easily have usurped Line had the Kirkistown event at the end of last month not been abandoned due to heavy rain. Smyth had qualified

on pole and had a good chance of taking his 2025 wins total beyond the 14 it now stands at.

Next up is the one new name inside the top 10: Jonathan Moore. The former Junior Saloons frontrunner has been the driver to beat amid the older Clubsport Caymans of the Porsche Sprint Challenge GB this year. He notched up a further four class victories across the Silverstone and Brands Hatch weekends to shoot up into fourth, while he was only 14th at the time of the last printed update. But he too could have enjoyed more success had severe suspension damage not put him out of the Kent finale.

Meanwhile, Radical conqueror Marcus Littlewood, Miata Trophy master Aidan Hills and Legends champion Tyler Read are all on the rise, but Paul Sibley has fallen from fourth to ninth as the Midget & Sprite Challenge season had already concluded.

For weekly top-50 tables, head to [autosport.com/national](https://www.autosport.com/national)

NATIONAL RANKINGS

Correct as of 8 October

LEADERBOARD

POS DRIVER (CAR)

OVERALL WINS CLASS WINS TOTAL

1	Ali Bray (Mazda MX-5 Mk1)	20	0	20
2	George Line (Dallara F308)	15	0	15
3	Jason Smyth (Van Diemen RF00/JL12)	14	0	14
4	Jonathan Moore (Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 Clubsport)	0	14	14
5	Simon Allaway (Lotus Esprit V8)	13	0	13
6	Marcus Littlewood (Radical SR3 XXR)	13	0	13
7	Aidan Hills (Mazda MX-5 Mk3)	12	0	12
8	Tyler Read (Legends Ford Coupe)	12	0	12
9	Paul Sibley (MG Midget)	12	0	12
10	Matthew Highcock (BMW 120i)	11	0	11

Note: All car races in UK and Ireland are included except qualification/ repechage, consolation and handicap races. No races in other countries. Class wins are only counted when there are at least six starters in the class, except: when the race is part of a multi-stage event where six or more have taken part in earlier heats that feed into a semi-final or final; when multiple championships are merged in the same race, the 'overall' winner from the slower championship

can count a class win as long as that championship has at least 10 starters across all classes. Only classes divided by car characteristics are included, not those divided by driver characteristics such as ability, professional status, age, experience (for example rookie or pro-am classes). Each race counts only once, so an overall winner's class win is not added. Where there is a tie, overall wins take precedence. Where there is still a tie, average grid size for a driver's wins determines the order.

6 MARCUS LITTLEWOOD



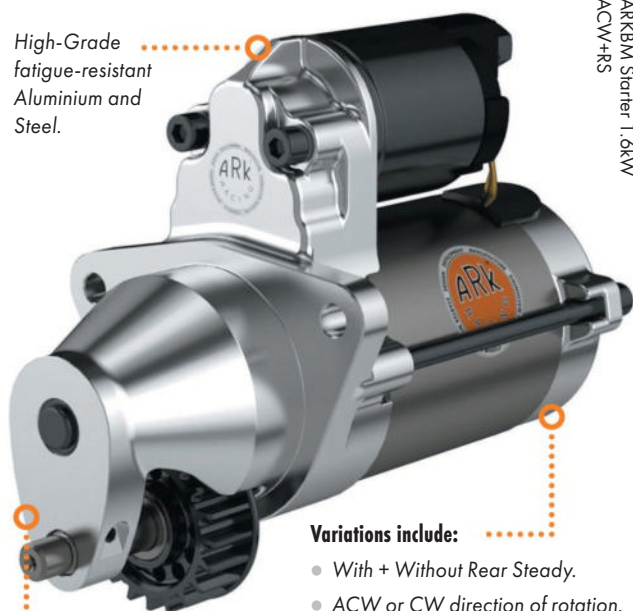
7 AIDAN HILLS





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INSIDER

Less can mean more for club calendars, says Stephen Lickorish

The past month has been a very busy one for national motorsport. Alongside a packed schedule of events with championships reaching conclusions, there has also been a flurry of announcements, as you can see from the previous few pages. From new series, new promoters, new cars and new initiatives, there is plenty going on.

But the most common news to emerge in recent weeks concerns 2026 calendars. There was once a time when many clubs revealed schedules in November or December. Not anymore. The pressure for dates means they must all act fast, or risk being left with the unwanted scraps, and hence organisers have been unveiling draft calendars months earlier than in the past.

And there has been a common theme among many of these announcements: the schedules have shrunk a little. Unless you have been tucked away in an ivory tower, shielded from the stagnating UK economy, the nation's tough financial position has unsurprisingly had an impact on national motorsport. From the top levels, like British GT, to more humble grassroots series, many organisers have been grappling with a reduction in entries amid the hard times. One way they can try to reduce the monetary burden on competitors is by having fewer events. It is a tactic British GT has adopted after suffering a significant grid size shrink this year.

But its promoter SRO is not alone in thinking less could mean more. "We do feel next year is going to be a bit tight financially and therefore we're going to go down from eight to seven weekends," says Mini 7 Racing Club commercial manager Colin Peacock. "We're also not going to any faraway rounds, no Croft or Zandvoort. We've got all of our favourites and we're racing with BTCC at Thruxton in July, going to the Mini Festival and we've got Castle Combe."

The Classic Sports Car Club is another to have reassessed its number of race dates for 2026. Club managing director David Smitheram admits he was too ambitious this season amid the tough task of predicting competitor demand over a year in advance when making bookings. "We gave too many days to our members and that diluted grids," he says. "We've done 17 days in 2025, typically we have 14 or 15, so we're now returning to the same number of days."

But a key element of CSCC calendar announcements over the years has been innovation, and that remains the case. Alongside some of its popular regular fixtures, the club is also making a wholesale return to Spa, offering a couple of two-hour enduros at Donington Park – something Smitheram says has been considered for well over a decade – and is organising the first-ever night races at Knockhill.

"I'm constantly trying to think of something new," he explains. "I think Knockhill's going to be probably the most exciting venue you could do a night race at because of its up-and-down nature. You're going to drop down Duffus Dip and the spotlights are just going to light up the bottom of the dip and, going up the other side, you're going to light up the sky. It's going to be pretty exciting. We will have a series of day races and then a pair of night races – one for classic cars and one for modern cars."

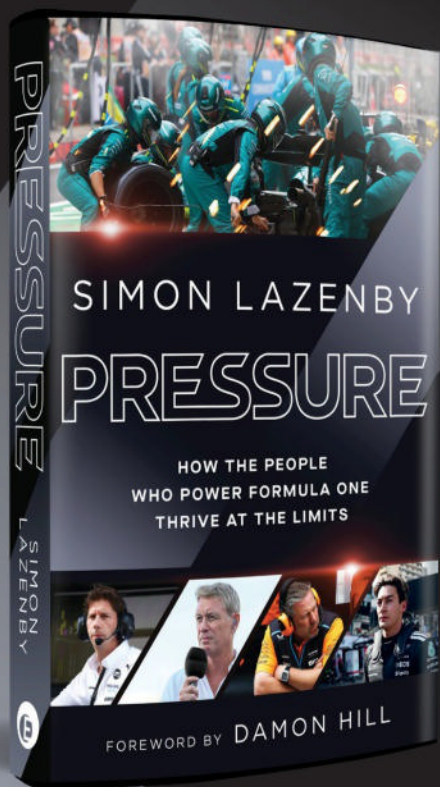
The Historic Sports Car Club is also planning a special event next year as it celebrates its 60th birthday. The club will return to where it all began back in 1966 with a two-day August Castle Combe meeting. "It's our heritage – we hope to fill it with cars of the type on which we started," says HSCC CEO Andy Dee-Crowne. "We're hoping for D-types and Frazer Nashes to celebrate that."

One of the very first calendar announcements, back in May, came from the British Touring Car Championship.

"There was once a time when clubs revealed schedules in November or December. Not anymore"

And with a new junior support series not now due until 2027, there is a chance for more guest categories to appear after this year's rather sparse timetables. Legends will be at the Donington Park opener, for example, while Caterham has secured four slots, three for its top-tier Seven UK championship and a first BTCC appearance for the 310R division.

As more clubs reveal plans, it's important for everyone to take stock. If others follow in British GT's, the M7RC's and CSCC's footsteps and have fewer fixtures, it brings many benefits. It decreases pressure on stretched volunteers and can help coalesce competitors around fewer, better-subscribed meetings. If every category had just one fewer round, the effect would be transformative. Sometimes less really can mean more. ✽



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INSIDER

Ed Hardy on an impressive campaign for British GT's champions

So there it was. The scene much of the paddock had been expecting ever since the 2025 British GT opener at Donington Park. Smiles and a sense of relief from Charles Dawson and Kiern Jewiss, as the 2 Seas Mercedes pair were crowned overall series champions for the first time.

They certainly didn't have it easy, despite leading the championship since the first round, for that was the weekend the political side of this title campaign kicked in. You see, Jewiss is ranked silver in the FIA gradings and Dawson is a bronze, and Silver-Am pairings don't often challenge for wins against crews that boast a professional driver with a gold or platinum status.

Yet the 2 Seas pair dominated the Donington opener from pole, which included Dawson topping the amateur qualifying session by seven tenths. Many thus claimed he should have a silver licence, but it was too late to change, so for round two the #42 Mercedes was given an extra 30kg of ballast for exceeding expectations.

"That rocked us," says Dawson, amid the feeling of 'them against us', and the pair initially struggled next time out at Silverstone, qualifying only seventh. Although Dawson/Jewiss eventually walked away with a maximum total that weekend, due to the winner being a non-point-scoring entry, there was a lot of luck involved.

The unpredictable, three-hour Silverstone 500 is often decided by who nails the right strategy and, on that occasion, it was the 2 Seas duo. The extra ballast was then reduced to 25kg from round three onwards, and the pair got on with it, rode every storm, and two additional wins resulted in their crowning moment at the finale.

"So much work and so much effort went into this programme," says Jewiss. "So to come out on top, we did deserve it. We've had everything thrown at us, we've jumped every hurdle this year and it's very

nice to go out winning the title."

It may seem mighty impressive given they were both British GT3 rookies, but Dawson and Jewiss had faced similar situations before. Jewiss, 23, was a big name on the national scene growing up, clinching the British Formula 4 and Porsche Carrera Cup GB titles, and it was only a sabbatical in 2024 that led to him being a silver.

Dawson, 34, meanwhile, won the British GT4 Pro-Am crown last year, so the pair were well rehearsed in running a successful campaign. There was a feeling that 2025 would be their only chance to win the title together, but the provisional FIA gradings for 2026 show Jewiss bumping up to a gold, while Dawson – perhaps surprisingly on the face of it – remains a bronze.

Much of that is down to his debut outings in GT World Challenge though, as he has generally found it tougher against sterner opposition. Regardless, it does seem that GT racing has found a new star bronze, who has all the potential to reach the top.

One only needed to look two garages down at Donington to see Darren Leung. He claimed the 2023 British GT crown in his full rookie year and has since taken a class title in GT World Challenge, a class podium at Le Mans and LMGTC3 victories in the World Endurance Championship.

"Same approach we've taken this year: corner by corner, session by session," says Dawson, when Leung's journey was put to him. "We'll sit down and work out what the plans are. But we're not thinking too far ahead. Ultimately, I would like to continue as a bronze and have success, of course, but in what series and what we do is TBC."

Quite a boring answer, but it is evidence of a level-headed nature that has served the pair well this year and the reply also leaves a lot of possibilities. Dawson

"We've had everything thrown at us, we've jumped every hurdle this year"

loves racing in Britain, but he's also fascinated by what's on the continent.

"We're certainly talking about next year," says 2 Seas boss Tom Hodgson. "We don't have anything signed yet, but we're looking at options. We have to remember the field we've been racing in, in British GT, and look at his pace, perhaps in the Europe side, where the bronze field has a little bit more depth to it. But for sure, he's a strong bronze and great to have him."

So what's next is unknown, maybe the pair will defend their British GT crown, but this year has shown the true potential of Dawson and Jewiss. Key to this championship was their resilience, and the immense character both displayed suggests they will be a success in whatever they decide. ✨

NATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MONTH

Plenty of champions have been crowned in recent weeks, while there has also been a victorious cameo from a Le Mans winner and a fantastic Frazer Nash thrash



UNEXPECTED GLORY IN GB3 AND GB4

Alex Ninovic unexpectedly wrapped up the GB3 crown with a round to spare at Donington Park. The Rodin racer won the first two bouts and, when key rival Patrick Heuzenroeder was involved in a pile-up at the start of race three, Ninovic (12) – runner-up in British Formula 4 last year – sealed the deal.

There was an unanticipated outcome in GB4 as well when Elite Motorsport's Ary Bansal, third in the points heading into the event, walked away with the title after main rivals Isaac Phelps and Dan Guinchard tangled in the opener.

JEP

MORE RED BULL JUNIOR SUCCESS

British Formula 4 and Ginetta Junior have joined the long list of categories that Red Bull Juniors have triumphed in after double success for the energy drink giant. Hitech's Fionn McLaughlin had a commanding lead entering the Brands Hatch F4 finale and there were no late slip-ups as he sealed the title with second in the opener.

Red Bull is used to the winning feeling with a certain Dutchman, but it clearly has another star from the Netherlands on its books as Rocco Coronel wrapped up the Ginetta spoils with fourth in the first Donington Park contest.



JEP



PORSCHE FINALES ARE TENSE AGAIN

Porsche series have a habit of producing dramatic deciders and that was the case this year at Brands. Will Martin again fell just short of Carrera Cup glory, missing out by two points to Andrew Rackstraw. The pair tussled in both races and, while Martin got the upper hand, Rackstraw (Century) kept calm to win the points battle.

"I knew they were going to throw everything at it – they drove an exceptional race and tried everything in the rulebook," said the South African, who is now targeting Walter Hayes Trophy glory.

It was just as frantic in Sprint Challenge GB, as Toro Verde's points leader Tom Bradshaw "made a complete hash" of the finale's first lap. He initially jumped the start but was so far back in his grid box he did not gain an advantage, and instead was hit at Paddock. Bradshaw finished fourth to prevail.

JOY RICHINGS



CLIVE GREEN

EASY FOR RYDER AS HE SEALS TITLE EARLY

A win and a second for Matthew Ryder at Prescott in early September ensured he claimed back-to-back British Hillclimb championships with two events remaining. Ryder was therefore handily able to skip the subsequent Doune fixture amid the recent birth of his child!



JEP

GOLDEN BROWN MAKES GT4 HISTORY

As Kiern Jewiss and Charles Dawson swept to GT3 glory, it was closer in British GT's GT4 ranks. History was made at Donington Park when Optimum's Jack Brown (left) became the first driver to win two overall GT4 titles, with victory alongside Marc Warren in their McLaren Artura.

TANDY ENJOYS HIS MINI RETURN

Le Mans 24 Hours winner Nick Tandy made an unexpected return to his Mini racing roots at Brands Hatch. With Mini Challenge title contender Jamie Osborne forced out on medical grounds, NAPA Racing turned to ex-Ministox and Mini Se7ens racer Tandy. He finished runner-up to Nathan Edmundson in the opener but then battled to win the other two bouts.

“I’m happy and it’s been fun,” smiled Tandy. “Everyone expects you to be competitive, but there’s more pressure here than when I drive my GTP Hypercar because that’s my comfort zone. I sweated more in that first 20-minute race than I do in a 24-hour race!”

Osborne’s absence opened the door to Exce1r8’s Tom Ovenden to seal the title. He had already been closing Osborne’s large early points lead but eventually finished 108 clear of Max Edmundson.



JEP



OLLIEREAD

FRENETIC FRAZER NASH FIGHT AT COMBE

One of the highlights of this year’s Castle Combe Autumn Classic was the Freddie Giles Frazer Nash race. Theo Hunt (1953 Le Mans Replica) pipped Patrick Blakeney-Edwards (1925 Super Sports) by 0.122 seconds after a fantastic fight at the head of the 31-car extravaganza.



REDWATERIMAGES

STRETTON AVOIDS SPA PERILS TO WIN AGAIN

Martin Stretton scored a fifth victory in Roadbook’s Spa Six Hours, taking the spoils in an original Ford GT40 alongside Diogo Ferrao. “For the last hour I was waiting for Spa to bite me,” admitted Stretton. The Ginetta G4R of Nicolai Kjaergaard and Alexander Weiss was runner-up.



BEN LAWRENCE

SPECIAL McRAE CELEBRATION

Big names, star cars and fans flocked to Knockhill for the McRae Rally Challenge. The event celebrated several notable anniversaries for the legendary rallying dynasty, including 30 years since Colin's World Rally Championship title and 50 years in the sport for his father Jimmy.

Appropriately enough, the competitive rally was won by Jimmy's grandson Max, who scored his maiden outright victory at the wheel of a Skoda Fabia Rally2. Jimmy was also driving a Ford Escort Mk2 with granddaughter Hollie making her debut alongside.

Petter Solberg wowed the crowds, while IndyCar ace Dario Franchitti gave rallying a go, taking to the wheel of a Vauxhall Firenza. The memories were flowing back for everyone, with Franchitti saying: "It's a bit emotional for me and to see the turn-out is incredible. This shows you the draw the McRae name and Colin, in particular, has."

MOSS INSPIRES AUDI RECREATION

Forty-five years after witnessing Stirling Moss narrowly beaten to British Saloon Car Championship class success at Brands Hatch, long-time Audi enthusiast Andy Foyle debuted a replica Audi 80 GLE in Pre-'83 Touring Cars at Silverstone. Moss was tempted out of retirement by Audi for the 1980 season but, in the alien environment of front-wheel-drive tin-tops and slick tyres, could not match team-mates Richard Lloyd and Tony Lanfranchi's 1600cc class wins. But he inspired a 12-year-old Foyle to later build his meticulous copy, differing only where modern safety regulations dictate.



MICK WALKER

BTCC champion Tom Ingram



‘TING’ PUTS HIS STING INTO THE BTCC

Tom Ingram became champion for the second time in early October at Brands Hatch. But the path to the title began 12 months earlier

MARCUS SIMMONS

Tom Ingram is now a two-time winner of the British Touring Car Championship. He’s sprayed the champagne on the end-of-season podium, he’s done the photo shoots, interviews, posed for selfies with spectators, taken the congratulations from well-wishers. Now he’s in the back of the Excelr8 Motorsport truck, quaffing on a well-earned Peroni as darkness falls on the Brands Hatch paddock outside. And answering more questions.

“This is pretty bloody special, I’ll be honest with you,” he sighs. “I didn’t really know what to expect coming into this weekend, because there were so many unknowns with general pressures, finale jitters, finale nerves, finale weather.”

That first title, in 2022, came after a final-race showdown against Ash Sutton and Jake Hill. Back then, Excelr8 was the little-team-made-big, its Hyundai i30 N Fastback still relatively early in development. Sutton and the team now known as Alliance Racing – or NAPA Racing UK – turned the tables in 2023 with a dominant campaign in the massively re-engineered Ford Focus ST. Hill claimed honours last year for the mighty West Surrey Racing with the BMW 3 Series, beating Ingram at the last gasp...

“This one feels more special,” Ingram continues. “The first one felt like we came into the weekend as the underdogs and pulled it off. This year we have left nothing unturned and you know what? I take more satisfaction from this one. We won it in 2022, and we came back in 2023 and NAPA dominated, and actually it changes the way you think, what you look at and the work ethic that goes into it.

“I take more satisfaction in knowing that we turned around a NAPA domination in 2023 into being a very good car in 2024, and then going another step further in 2025. We were testing two weeks after the season finished. Everyone has a very short memory as to the performance we had in 2023 against the NAPA cars. The work of [team-mates] Tom [Chilton], Adam [Morgan], Senna [Proctor], myself, as well as all our engineers, our mechanics, everyone who has been involved, we have created an absolute monster of a touring car that is beyond a pleasure to drive.”

“There were so many unknowns, general pressures, finale jitters, finale nerves, finale weather”

That work began two weeks after disappointment in the 2024 finale, when Ingram and Chilton spent three days pounding the Hyundais around Anglesey. Back in late 2021, prior to the first year of hybrid, Ingram had tested the car with ballast added exactly where the hefty Cosworth kit would be located, taking advantage of engineer Spencer Aldridge’s knowledge from their Speedworks Motorsport days, when that team had carried out the development testing on the system. It played a key part in his 2022 triumph.

Bearing in mind the removal of hybrid for 2025 was announced last winter, and that the teams surely knew what was coming, was testing without that weight the focus of the Anglesey running? “You’ve got it!” chimes >>

Ingram. “That’s exactly what we did. That was very much the gameplan of what we wanted to do. We had all but three days of perfect running, almost to the point that track temperature was almost exactly the same at every single part of the day, the wind was non-existent. It was like being on a simulator – you were able to get three days identical. It was incredibly useful for us.”

Clearly, it’s not as simple as bolting the 2021 set-up back on, because of the development that has taken place since then. “We’re not the same philosophy as we were in 2021,” explains Ingram. “It’s a complete revolution from there. But also a lot of the stuff we worked on in 2022, 2023, 2024 has become totally irrelevant. We had to reinvent the wheel, and that’s where those three days that Vertu [the team’s title sponsor] very kindly invested heavily in for us was a real kick up the backside: it’s not just take the weight out and away you go.

“Tom and I both left at the end of the three days feeling pretty confident if I’m honest, pretty happy with what we’d done, and good that we were able to do a lot of that even before people’s hangovers had stopped from the weekend before.”

But still... “I’ve always been a firm believer, certainly in recent years, of just focus on us. That’s great, but when you’re testing at a circuit on your own, and we’re doing, let’s say, a 1m25s, for all we know Ash could have been going round at a 23.9, or he could have going round at 27.9. A lot of the time you just have to go, ‘Does it feel right? And is it doing what we want it to? Yes. Well, we have to be pleased with that.’”

The result has been a car that Ingram has praised all season. His qualifying record, even on his usual one second per lap of TOCA Turbo Boost as the championship leader, has been incredible: he put it in the top four at all but the final two rounds. You’d probably say that main rival Sutton and his own tech wizard Antonio Carrozza played a slightly cannier strategy across the year with tyre choice on race

“A lot of the time we’ve not touched the car – we’ve given it a polish and put some fuel in it”

days, otherwise the title could have been wrapped up at least a race earlier.

Much has been made of the straightline performance, but Ingram and his Excelr8 cohorts argue that it’s a combination of engine, mid-corner performance (not to mention his incredible corner entry speeds), and the advantageous aero of the Hyundai’s fastback shape. “This is the great thing,” he enthuses. “As a base car, I really don’t think you’re going to beat it in terms of the shape of a touring car. We always thought the Avensis [Ingram’s 2014-18 weapon at Speedworks] was a great shape, and this thing’s just gone a step further.”

And, while Sutton and Carrozza seem to have spent many weekends trying different philosophies before hitting the sweet spot on the ageing, boxy Focus,

Ingram and Aldridge have often been there right from the get-go. “A lot of the time we’ve not touched the car – we’ve given it a bit of a polish and put some fuel in it,” chuckles Ingram. “What it means is that you can focus on the driver. I know we always joke that the driver’s always perfect, but actually there’s a huge, huge, *huge* underutilised factor, which is the driver.

“The first thing we always do is look at the car, but actually if you can focus on the driver as well in terms of having the car in a nice window... Oulton Park was a great example of that. We rolled out for FP1 and my first flying lap just felt spot-on. ‘What do you need from the car?’ ‘Nothing, it’s perfect. I’ve got no issues with it at all; it does everything I need it to do. Front-end performance limitless, I’ve got limitless traction, I can smash every single kerb on the circuit and nothing happens.’

“So we start going through it, and while we talk about Spencer as a huge part of the team, Matt Campbell, my data engineer [who Ingram describes as “the unsung hero of car 80”], is as good in that triangle between Spencer and me as anybody. Matt knows exactly what Spencer and I need from the job: ‘There’s a two-thousandth here, a hundredth there, a quarter of a tenth here’. Then all of a sudden you improve by another two tenths. That’s the lovely thing.”

The shame about this year is that the title fight has been more from a distance, with Ingram and Sutton often diverging on tyre strategy. “I’d say we’ve both learned a lot off each other as well in terms of that,” reckons Ingram. “I think Ash has gained a bit more respect for me than he had before, and likewise. We’ve seen the strategic games and battles being played more than we have in other seasons. It was better for Ash to finish fourth than third at Oulton [in race one], and on that weekend he outscored me by effectively giving away points.”

As well as the BTCC title, Ingram became the first driver to win back-to-back RAC TT Celebration races in two different cars at the Goodwood Revival when he teamed up with Richard Kent in the famous Jaguar E-type ‘CUT 7’. Unbeknown to most, Excelr8’s hugely popular veteran team manager Marvin Humphries played a small part.

“There was a special connection because the ‘CUT 7 Jag’ is one Marvin used to run when Nick Whale had it. We had Marvin at home watching with a tear in his eye while a car he ran 20 years ago won the race with me in it! Marvin brought in what must have been 40 pages of a feature in a magazine on it, all the stats, all the ‘we used to do this, we used to do that’ – everything on file from when he ran it.”

And what of 2026? Ingram’s deal with Excelr8 runs out about now, but “my mentality of being in this championship is never to be a team-hopper. For me, longevity has always been the key to it. It never means I’m writing myself out of being open to offers from elsewhere, but realistically I think what we’ve built around us, we’re in a really special place. I’ve certainly got no intentions of going elsewhere.”

And anyway, there’s some testing of the Hyundai with developments for 2026 booked in early November... ❄



Car felt perfect and was massively quick from first flying lap of practice at Oulton

JEP



Ingram reckons his second BTCC crown feels more special after leaving "nothing unturned"



JEP JEP



Goodwood victory in famous 'CUT 7' E-type had a special team connection

J.BLOXHAM



Ward celebrates what he thought was a fine second in D-type

J.BLOXHAM



J.BLOXHAM

JAGUAR ACE EXPERIENCES

GOODWOOD ROLLER COASTER

After 30 years of racing, Chris Ward is inured to disappointment, but patience, perseverance and skill reaped several Revival rewards

MARCUS PYE

The Goodwood Revival Meeting, inaugurated in September 1998 – precisely 50 years after car racing was first run on RAF Westhampnett aerodrome's 2.4-mile perimeter track – is all about celebrating social history through theatre. Far more than just another 'historic racing' showcase, it fundamentally charts Great Britain's post-war regeneration and the lifestyle of the era leading up to July 1966, when the gates closed, ending 19 seasons of motorsport of a style unseen elsewhere.

The motor circuit was basic, and fast, but the Duke of Richmond and Gordon's parties at adjacent Goodwood House were legendary for racing royalty, who entertained "the right crowd" on his playground at the big promoted fixtures. Weekend warriors, some with ambition, enjoyed the venue's challenges too, at second-tier British Automobile Racing Club Members' Meetings.

Goodwood's contemporary era oozed top-class sport. The Nine Hour sportscar races of 1952, 1953 and 1955, then the Royal Automobile Club Tourist Trophy contests of the world sportscar championship and subsequent Gran Turismo epochs stretching into the 1960s, provided as much interest and colour as the glamorous Formula 1 races of its final decade. Easter Monday was an unmissable pilgrimage for fans clamouring to watch

heroes Stirling Moss, Jim Clark and Jackie Stewart – plus rising stars – in action.

As in many great reflections of a bygone century, the window on history may be slightly skewed, or subtly tweaked, to bring a desired result at Revivals. Even in its 27th edition, though, racegoers enter into the spirit by eagerly espousing the classless 1940s-60s dress code, which raised eyebrows when the then Earl of March decreed it for his 1998 groundbreaker. That the now Duke's ambition to bring racing back – a seed sown from his racer grandfather's DNA – was realised after a diligently fought multi-year battle with the local council certainly turned the family estate's fortunes around. And brought bonanzas to B&B owners, hotels and businesses in the Chichester area and further afield.

It is the breadth of the car parks which abut the venue, overlooked by the The Trundle perched majestically atop the lofty downs beside Goodwood's horse racing course, which catch the eye on arrival. But for an enclosure for collectors' cars of the pre-1966 era, there is no parking inside the circuit. A funfair and traders' area sits over the road too, but once into the campus the spotlight turns onto another world, that of your ancestors replete with competition cars lined up under shelters, waiting to be called to action. Memories of Brands Hatch in 1971, when even F5000 cars hid under cramped market stalls on the sloped upper paddock, come flooding back for me. But this is better, a far more immersive experience.

Themes abound at every Revival. Apart from celebrations of an iconic champion to mark an anniversary – Jim Clark was remembered 60 years >>

"The Duke's ambition to bring racing back was realised after a multi-year battle"

after his second F1 championship in the extraordinary 1965 season in which he also won the Indianapolis 500 with Team Lotus, and wherever he raced, including a mighty hat-trick with Lotus 25, Cortina and 30 at Goodwood – there are counterpoints. A light-hearted accessible vehicle cavalcade and, providing perspective, a sombre commemoration of a significant date in history linked to the circuit's military past – the 80th anniversary of VE day poignantly highlighted the losses and sacrifices of the Second World War on both sides.

The freedom to enjoy life that the cessation of hostilities brought was amply illustrated daily by a load of hot air. More than 100 split-window Volkswagen Type 2s took to the track, from hippymobiles to emergency service vans redolent of the 1960s. Although your scribe is (just) too young to remember it, my late father and godfather hired VW 'Microbus' campers from ill-fated racer Chris Bristow's family garage near our South London home for expeditions to Oulton Park and Aintree. The hallowed – and the rarest are now reassuringly expensive – Vee-Dubs got the party started before 'official practice' (forget qualifying) and racing got under way.

The Goodwood Revival race programme over three days does not run chronologically, but in my book the weekend's best was the Sussex Trophy 1950s sportscar retrospective. The battles between agile Lotus 15s, thundering Listers, curvaceous Jaguar D-types and meaty American Scarab and Canadian Sadler-Chevrolet monsters, with Cooper Monacos in cameo roles, was as compelling as any I'd witnessed over all 26 previous Revivals I'd reported.

When Christian Albrecht's iridescent blue Scarab's engine blew as the lead bunch accelerated out of Lavant corner onto the flat-out blast to Woodcote – where speeds are only marginally quicker than on the adverse camber-enhanced run through the Fordwater

“It was no surprise to see Jenson Button and Alex Buncombe dominate in the fastest C-type”

kink, midway from Madgwick and the notoriously tricky entrance to St Mary's – the oiltdown sent chasers everywhere. Poleman Olly Bryant, whose Sussex hat-trick aspirations looked to have evaporated when he stalled his Lotus 15 on the grid, was already back among the leaders as the Scarab skated off. If he wasn't back in the game already in a 25-minute race, red flags while fourth played into his hands.

From the restart Bryant wriggled to the front, hotly pursued by Chris Ward, drifting Nigel Webb's 1955 long-nosed D-type beautifully through corners on the far-from-flat track. Perched in front of the Malcolm Sayer-designed Jaguar's offset tailfin, red and yellow helmeted Ward – a Formula Vauxhall privateer 30 years ago – howled after Bryant's two-litre Coventry-Climax

FPF-engined Lotus, quickest of several, plus April's Members' Meeting Salvadori Cup race winner Bonamy Grimes's ex-works/Graham Hill 2.5-litre version.

Bryant took the chequered flag, but his joy was short-lived. In the 'tech shed' afterwards an engine photo on his car's HTP – issued in 2018, with 10-year validity, and scrutineered many times since – was discovered to show a previous unit and slightly different exhaust routing to avoid superheating the footwell, thus he was excluded. That Ward's Jaguar was accorded victory brought historic symmetry 70 years after Mike Hawthorn and Ivor Bueb's success – albeit a muted one – in the tragic 1955 Le Mans 24 Hours. It could almost have been pre-ordained.

Ward, chief instructor at Silverstone's racing experience for years prior to immersing himself professionally in the classic racing world, experienced a Revival of mixed emotions. Fourth in Friday evening's Freddie March Memorial Trophy race to dusk anchoring Nigel Webb's Jaguar C-type – XKC004, the oldest survivor in regular use – he was set to win Saturday's drama-laced Stirling Moss Memorial Trophy pre-1963 GT fest when the E-type he was anchoring ran out of fuel, a counter-intuitive error that left its preparer bereft. Ward, inured to disappointment over a long career, undemonstratively put the miscalculation behind him.

More triumphs would surely follow. In Sunday's Revival finale, Ward danced a Jaguar Mk1 elegantly to a close second – between young victor James Dorlin and Welsh wizard Grant Williams – in the St Mary's Trophy 1950s saloon contest decider, guaranteeing aggregate victory with Gordon Shedden, ninth the previous day in the 'pro' contest. Chris duly won the coveted Rolex Driver of the Event timepiece. Six days later, at Spa, Ward maintained his momentum, winning MRL's Stirling Moss Trophy race in Fred Wakeman's ex-Tommy Sopwith Equipe Endeavour Cooper-Jaguar T38.

Goodwood's tin-top race, which alternates between decades, is one in which imagination runs riot over originality, yet nonetheless delights viewers at trackside or on streaming broadcasts with its eccentricity. The Ford Fairlane of Thruxton owner Alex Thistlethwayte and Thunderbird of Fred Shepherd – second and first respectively in Saturday's leg, with Steve Soper and the ever-smiling Tom Kristensen up – floundered in wet conditions in which BMC A-series engine tuning guru Nick Swift set fastest lap in a Mini. To say nothing of the Americana, how many of Alec Issigonis's pocket rockets raced in this spec and capacity in the 1950s?

Elsewhere, it was no surprise to see Jenson Button and best buddy Alex Buncombe – whose grandfather John raced D-type in period – dominate Friday's Freddie March Memorial race in surely the world's fastest Jaguar C-type. Jenson – who your reporter first watched cleaning up as a lad in the Gulf TVS Kart Superprix at Dorset's Clay Pigeon circuit, where Lewis Hamilton's talent was brought to the attention of McLaren boss Ron Dennis – had yearned for this victory since 2022, when he'd blitzed the RAC TT Celebration field in F1 design guru Adrian Newey's E-type and relayed Harrison >>



Clark celebration, with 1965 Indy-winning 38 to the fore, was a highlight

J.BLOXHAM



Bryant starred in Sussex Trophy before his Lotus was excluded

J.BLOXHAM



Dorlin splashed to saloon win but Ward (behind) won overall



Button was overjoyed with his first Goodwood win, driving C-type

J.BLOXHAM



Andrew Smith's 904
defeated the Elan hordes
to win Fordwater Trophy

J.BLOXHAM



J.BLOXHAM

Cobras led RAC TT early
on (left); Gurney was
top GT in 1964 event



GP LIBRARY/UNIVERSAL IMAGES GROUP/GETTY IMAGES



Brundle's Lola took
Whitsun victory after
Nick Padmore retired

KEYWOOD/LAT IMAGES

Newey, only for the hot rod to break.

Button and Buncombe were not as competitive in Jensen's newly acquired ex-Ed Nelson E-type, last of the fabled Dick Protheroe-built cars. Registered CUT 8 by the Husbands Bosworth garagiste's widow Rosemary (nee Massey, of tractor family fame, a regular Goodwood racer herself), she continued to enter it for Nelson and suspension guru Rhoddy Harvey-Bailey. Racing for the first time since 2013, the old warhorse gridded 19th of 29, all but three of which qualified inside 1m30s.

In 1964, when GT cars played second fiddle to sports-racers in Goodwood's final TT race, Dan Gurney and Phil Hill's works Shelby American Cobra Daytona coupes topped the class timesheets on 1m27.2s and 1m27.4s respectively, with Jack Sears and Roy Salvadori on 1m28.0s apiece in open Cobras. The Jaguar Es of Peter Sutcliffe and Peter Lumsden were row mates further back on 1m30.6s.

This time Rob Huff qualified an E-type second on 1m24.586s, 0.141 seconds behind the Cobra of Olly Bryant/Darren Turner, ostensibly the car Tommy Atkins entered for Salvadori 61 years previously, now hard-topped. Before the daily rains returned on Sunday, the winning E-type of Richard Kent/Tom Ingram – the ex-Protheroe FHC CUT 7 – broke 1m30s in the race, but Mike Whitaker's 1m26.385s on his first flier in his TVR Griffith 400 proved peerless.

The 1964 TT, over 130 laps (312 miles) was won by Graham Hill in Maranello Concessionaires' Ferrari 330P, from David Piper (Ferrari 250LM) and Gurney, two laps clear of Sears in John Willment's Cobra.

The two-litre GT support race that day saw Mike Spence victorious in Graham Warner's Chequered Flag Lotus Elan 26R, from the Porsche 904 Carrera GTs of veteran Dickie Stoop and Mike de Udy. The distinctive dark green de Udy car graced the Fordwater Trophy Production GT race this time, won by Andrew Smith in

“Gillies broke his tie with Richard Attwood to join Andy Middlehurst on nine event victories”

a 904 from a trio of Elans that lapped in the 1m27s and 1m28s, whereas Spence – his Ford twin-cam making 50bhp less – did 1m31.6s. Neil Dangerfield's Triumph SLR, a 1964 retirement, fared no better in current owner Richard Hall-Griffin's hands.

Among other highlights of the 2025 Revival were races at the opposite ends of its spectrum. In the ERA-rich Goodwood Trophy race Mark Gillies (R3A) broke his tie with Richard Attwood to join Andy Middlehurst on nine event victories, still five behind Gary Pearson's tally. Alex Brundle will equally remember it for his maiden win in a Lola T70 Spyder, at the scene of David Hobbs's third place in one of Eric Broadley's first big bangers, behind Clark (Lotus 30) and Bruce McLaren (McLaren-Elva M1A) in the Lavant Cup race on Easter Monday 1965. 🏁



GOODWOOD REVIVAL WINNERS

Freddie March Memorial Trophy for cars in the spirit of the Goodwood Nine Hours Races 1952-55

Jenson Button/Alex Buncombe (Jaguar C-type)

Goodwood Trophy Grand Prix & Voiturette Cars 1930-51

Mark Gillies (ERA R3A)

Madgwick Cup, sports-racing cars under three litres 1960-66

Will Nuthall (Elva-BMW Mk7S)

Fordwater Trophy, production sports & GT cars 1964-66

Andrew Smith (Porsche 904 Carrera GTS)

Whitsun Trophy, sports-racing prototypes 1960-66

Alex Brundle (Lola-Chevrolet T70 Spyder)

Stirling Moss Memorial Trophy for closed-cockpit GT cars to 1963

Matthew Holme/Andrew Jordan (Shelby Cobra)

Chichester Cup, front-engined Formula Junior cars

Stuart Roach (Alexis Mk2)

Sussex Trophy, world championship and production sports-racing cars 1955-60

Chris Ward (Jaguar D-type)

RAC Tourist Trophy Celebration, closed-cockpit GT cars 1964-66

Richard Kent/Tom Ingram (Jaguar E-type FHC)

Glover Trophy, 1.5-litre GP cars 1961-65

Stuart Hall (Lotus-Climax 21)

Richmond & Gordon Trophies, 2.5-litre GP cars 1953-60

Andy Willis (BRM P48-7)

St Mary's Trophy, production saloon cars 1950-59

Race one **Tom Kristensen** (Ford Thunderbird)

Race two **James Dorlin** (Lister-Jaguar Mk1)

Aggregate **Gordon Shedden/Chris Ward** (Jaguar Mk1)

FINISHING STRAIGHT

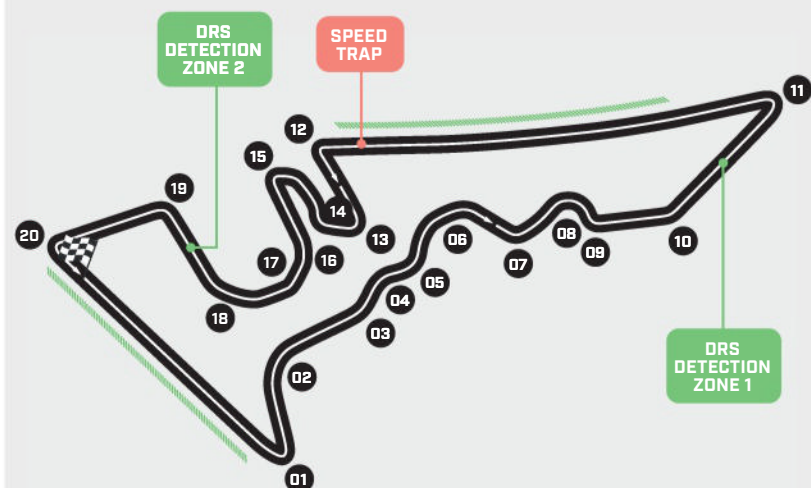
Brazilian GP

The calm before the storm... Interlagos oozes history and plays host to the Brazilian GP once again in November

UNITED STATES GP



F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 19



RACE DATA

Venue	Austin
First GP	2012
GPs held	12
Circuit length	3.426 miles
Number of laps	56
Race distance	191.834 miles
Race lap record	1m36.169s Charles Leclerc (2019)
Pole lap record	1m32.029s Valtteri Bottas (2020)
Most wins	Lewis Hamilton 5
Most poles	Lewis Hamilton 3
Most starts	Sergio Perez & Lewis Hamilton 12

TIMETABLE (UK TIME)

Friday 17 October

Practice 1	1830-1930
Sprint qualifying	2230-2314

Saturday 18 October

Sprint	1800
Qualifying	2200-2300

Sunday 19 October

Race	2000
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WHERE TO WATCH

Live coverage	Sky Sports F1
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SAY WHAT YOU WANT – TEXAS IS F1'S AMERICAN HOME

In light of today's Formula 1 fandom, it seems almost unfathomable that the US was a perennially tough nut to crack. It found a home at Circuit of The Americas, south-east of Austin, Texas, where the US Grand Prix has remained since 2012.

As a collection of facsimiles of some of the world's most famous corners, COTA features a sharp rise up to Turn 1, before descending into the roller coaster of left-rights inspired by Silverstone's Maggotts-Becketts complex. The 1.18km back straight offers the most likely point for overtaking at its conclusion, although

the series of switchback opportunities at the following corners (which leans on Hockenheim for inspiration) can yield plenty of side-by-side racing.

Then there's the high-energy replication of Istanbul Park's Turn 8 before the final corners to end the lap, which will challenge the drivers' bravery and their cars' adhesion to the road. Like many of the circuits designed in that era, it's a bit of a run-off fest, tarted up with an on-brand splash of red, white, and blue, but it's become a popular venue nonetheless.



PHIPPS/SUTTON IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES

PREVIOUS WINNERS

2024	Charles Leclerc	Ferrari
2023	Max Verstappen	Red Bull
2022	Max Verstappen	Red Bull
2021	Max Verstappen	Red Bull
2019	Valtteri Bottas	Mercedes
2018	Kimi Raikkonen	Ferrari
2017	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2016	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2015	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2014	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes



SENIOR GARAGE TECHNICIAN - RACE TEAM

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- Setting up the pitstop area as well as the management and maintenance of the equipment, including pitstop gantry, wheel guns and jacks
- Leading with the other Garage Technicians the loading and unloading of both air freight pallets at flyaway events and trucks in Europe.
- Conduct regular maintenance checks on all garage equipment, to ensure they are in perfect working order
- Provide hands-on support during practice sessions, qualifying, and races. Including active role in pitstops
- A good understanding of all Garage Technician roles and duties (fuel, tyres, pitstop equipment)
- Provide technical support to the team, troubleshooting and resolving any issues with garage equipment promptly
- Stay updated with the latest technological advancements in garage equipment and tools, recommending upgrades or new acquisitions

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- Coordinate media availability throughout F1 events
- Identify and pitch story ideas to media and facilitate their coverage of FIA activities

Communications:

- Develop and maintain strong relationships with key stakeholders and media representatives
- Monitor and analyse media coverage across all platforms (print, online, broadcast, newswires, social media)
- Research, draft and distribute press releases, briefings and official statements to targeted media

Digital:

- Collaborate with the internal digital team to develop engaging content and storytelling for FIA platforms
- Leverage IT and social media analytics to adapt content strategies to evolving trends

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- Fundamental understanding of internal combustion engines and their systems.

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MOTOR VEHICLE TECHNICIAN

Melvyn Rutter

Company Overview:

Melvyn Rutter Ltd is a family-run business and a Morgan factory-appointed aftersales and parts dealership. We specialise in international Morgan car sales, servicing, parts, and restoration for all Morgan cars, as well as other classic vehicles. Established in 1976, the business will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2026. Over the years, we have built in-depth knowledge of the marque and developed one of the largest parts stores worldwide outside of the Morgan factory itself.

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- **Repairs and Maintenance:** Perform routine maintenance tasks such as oil and filter changes, fluid replacements, and repair or replacement of faulty components (brakes, exhausts, suspension, etc.).
- **Customer Interaction:** Advise customers on required repairs, provide time estimates, and offer guidance on vehicle care when needed.
- **Record Keeping:** Maintain accurate service records and update each vehicle's history.

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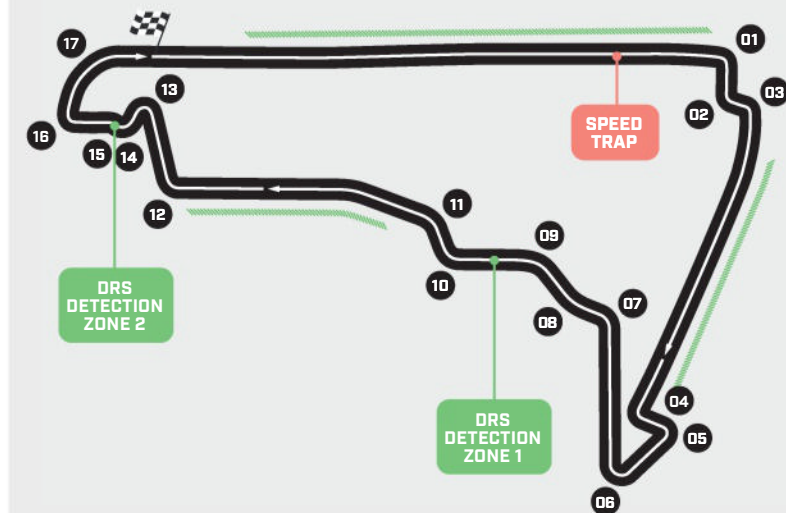


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MEXICAN GP

F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 20



JUST KEEP ON UNTIL YOU REACH HIGHER GROUND

Built in 1959, the Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez (named after Pedro and Ricardo Rodriguez) has been an on-off presence throughout F1's history. It returned to the F1 calendar in 2015, and its medium-term future was secured this year when an extension was announced to its current deal, meaning it will remain until at least 2028.

These days, the race is without the famed Peraltada; the circuit instead winds awkwardly through the Foro Sol stadium section, but offers a unique challenge thanks to its 2.2km altitude.

The reduction in air density is less of a problem for the current power units but, in the days of naturally aspirated engines, these proved to be a great deal wheezier versus the forced-induction powertrains of the time. With around 78% of the air density that you get at sea level, the cars will run with their most powerful wings as they gasp for downforce.

Expect plenty of support in the stadium; although home hero Sergio Perez is not on this year's grid, keen anticipation over his return in 2026 will sharpen the home fans' appetite.



Pedro Rodriguez, after whom the track is named (with brother Ricardo), on his way to fourth in his BRM in 1968 race



RACE DATA

Venue	Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez
First GP	1962
GPs held	25
Circuit length	2.674 miles
Number of laps	71
Race distance	189.881 miles
Race lap record	1m17.774s Valtteri Bottas (2021)
Pole lap record	1m14.759s Daniel Ricciardo (2018)
Most wins	Max Verstappen 5
Most poles	Jim Clark 5
Most starts	Max Verstappen, Sergio Perez, Lewis Hamilton, Carlos Sainz, Valtteri Bottas & Jack Brabham 8

TIMETABLE (UK TIME)

Friday 24 October

Practice 1	1930-2030
Practice 2	2300-0000

Saturday 25 October

Practice 3	1830-1930
Qualifying	2200-2300

Sunday 26 October

Race	2000
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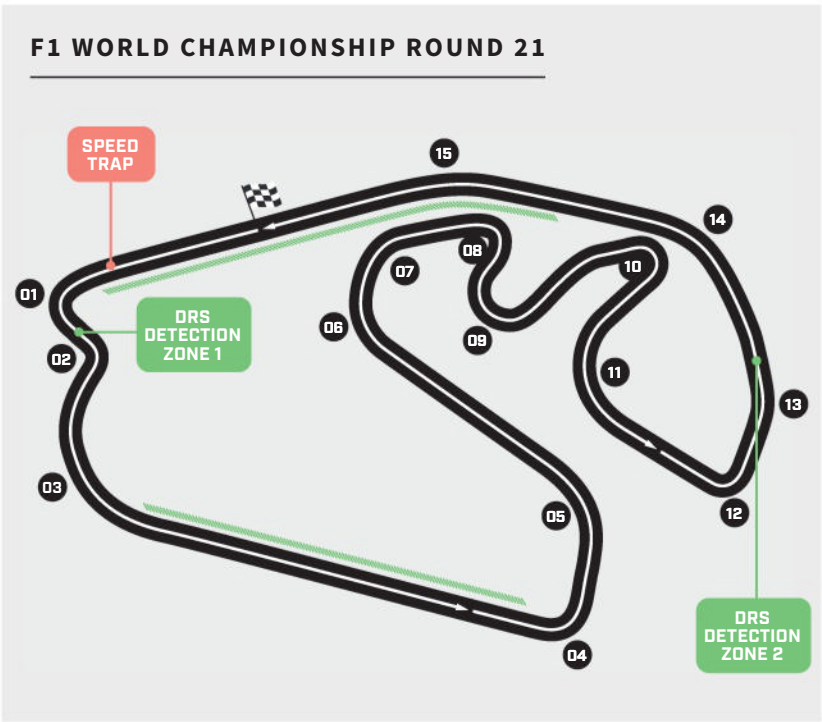
WHERE TO WATCH

Live coverage	Sky Sports F1
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PREVIOUS WINNERS

2024	Carlos Sainz	Ferrari
2023	Max Verstappen	Red Bull
2022	Max Verstappen	Red Bull
2021	Max Verstappen	Red Bull
2019	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2018	Max Verstappen	Red Bull
2017	Max Verstappen	Red Bull
2016	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2015	Nico Rosberg	Mercedes
1992	Nigel Mansell	Williams

BRAZILIAN GP



EMERSON, LAKES AND PALM TREES

As one of F1's classic venues, the Autodromo Jose Carlos Pace (or, more commonly, Interlagos) has thrown up plenty of exciting races, particularly if the weather becomes ever so slightly treacherous – and F1 arrives as Sao Paulo enters its rainy season. Max Verstappen's excellent drive last year was one of the key cornerstones in his retention of the title, parting the waves of chaos to clinch a decisive victory.

The undulating circuit features the downhill Senna S, which can prove a challenge at the start of the race as the

cars unload during the switchback on full tanks. On the exit, the run to Descida do Lago presents further overtaking opportunities, and the circuit begins to rise and fall in its series of flowing infield corners; Juncao marks the return uphill as the cars sweep around the bends preceding the start/finish straight.

For the first time in years, the fervent home support – who lauded Pace, Emerson Fittipaldi, Nelson Piquet and Ayrton Senna – has one of its own in the form of Gabriel Bortoleto. Unless we count honorary citizen Lewis Hamilton!



RACE DATA

Venue	Autodromo Jose Carlos Pace
First GP	1972
GPs held	42
Circuit length	2.677 miles
Number of laps	71
Race distance	190.101 miles
Race lap record	1m10.540s Valtteri Bottas (2018)
Pole lap record	1m07.281s Lewis Hamilton (2018)
Most wins	Michael Schumacher 4
Most poles	Ayrton Senna, Mika Hakkinen, Felipe Massa, Rubens Barrichello & Lewis Hamilton 3
Most starts	Fernando Alonso 21

TIMETABLE (UK TIME)

Friday 7 November	
Practice	1430-1530
Sprint qualifying	1830-1914
Saturday 8 November	
Sprint	1400
Qualifying	1800-1900
Sunday 9 November	
Race	1700

WHERE TO WATCH

Live coverage	Sky Sports F1
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PREVIOUS WINNERS

2024	Max Verstappen	Red Bull
2023	Max Verstappen	Red Bull
2022	George Russell	Mercedes
2021	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2019	Max Verstappen	Red Bull
2018	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2017	Sebastian Vettel	Ferrari
2016	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2015	Nico Rosberg	Mercedes
2014	Nico Rosberg	Mercedes

Central European Rally



MANON/NURPHOTO/GETTY IMAGES

WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP**Round 12/14**

Central European Rally
Passau, Germany
16-19 October

Round 13/14

Rally Japan
Toyota City, Japan
6-9 November

EUROPEAN LE MANS SERIES**Round 6/6**

Algarve Circuit, Portugal
18 October

INTERCONTINENTAL GT CHALLENGE**Round 5/5**

Indianapolis, USA
18 October

SUPER GT**Round 7/8**

Autopolis, Japan
19 October

Round 8/8

Motegi, Japan
2 November

TCR WORLD TOUR**Round 6/8**

Inje, South Korea
18-19 October

Round 7/8

Zhuzhou, China
1-2 November

NASCAR CUP SERIES**Round 34/36**

Talladega, USA
19 October

Round 35/36

Martinsville, USA
26 October

Round 36/36

Phoenix, USA
2 November

AUSTRALIAN SUPERCARS**Round 11/13**

Surfers Paradise, Australia
25-26 October

FORMULA REGIONAL EUROPEAN**Round 10/10**

Monza, Italy
25-26 October

WORLD ENDURANCE CHAMPIONSHIP**Round 8/8**

Sakhir, Bahrain
8 November

MALLORY PARK 750MC

Swift Sport, Ma7das, Hot Hatch, Historic 750F, Formula Vee, Clio Sport
18 October

OULTON PARK CSCC

Magnificent 7s/Open Series, Turbo Tin Tops/ New Millennium, Classic K/ Jaguars, Modern/Future Classics, Swinging 60s, Tin Tops/Puma Cup
18 October

CROFT MSVR

Pickups, Production GTIs, Trackday Championship, Clio Cup GB, EnduroKa
18-19 October

SILVERSTONE MSVR

Pre-War Sports,

Generations Trophy, RAC Woodcote/Stirling Moss Trophy, Pall Mall Cup, Gerry Marshall Trophy, Historic Touring Cars, HRDC Allstars, Pre-'63 GT, Jack Sears Trophy
18-19 October

SNETTERTON CTA

Time Attack, Racing Hondas
19 October

MONDELLO PARK MPSC

BOSS Ireland, SEAT Supercup, Fiestas (STs, Zetecs), Junior Minis, Legends, Strykers
19 October

OULTON PARK BRSCC

Fun Cup, ClubSport Trophy, Metros/Classic VWs
25 October

SILVERSTONE 750MC

Birkett Six-Hour Relay
25 October

LLANDUDNO

Cambrian Rally: British Rally Championship
Round 6/6
25 October

BRANDS HATCH BRSCC

Formula Ford Festival,

Fiestas (ST240, ST150, Junior), Production/ DS3 Cup, Super Saloons/ Tin Tops

25-26 October**BRANDS HATCH BARC**

Trucks, TCR UK, Civic Cup, Junior Saloons, Track Action, Mini Challenge Trophy
1-2 November

SILVERSTONE HSCC

Walter Hayes Trophy (Formula Ford), Monoposto, Ginetta Junior Winter Series, Alfa Romeos/Italian Intermarque, Allcomers
1-2 November

BRANDS HATCH BARC

Britcar Endurance, Hyundai Coupes, Classic Touring Cars
8 November

ANGLESEY BRSCC

Race of Remembrance, ClubSport Trophy
7-9 November

LYDDEN HILL

British Rallycross Championship
Round 7/7
8-9 November



The second big end-of-term FF1600 bash is the Walter Hayes Trophy at Silverstone, celebrating 25 years

JEP

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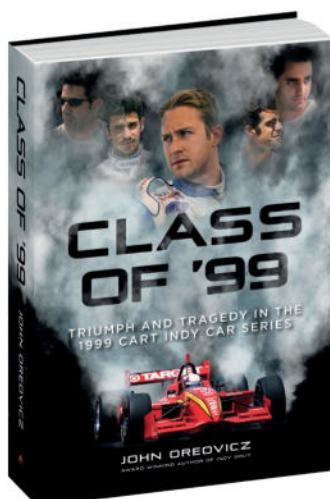


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CLASS OF '99

octanepress.com

RRP \$34.95

1999 was a pivotal year in Indycar racing history: a CART championship fought on track between Dario Franchitti and Juan Pablo Montoya. Away from the track, the category's stakeholders engaged in a self-destructive wrestle for control, which ultimately led to breakdown.

The action was spectacular – but also tragic, as Gonzalo Rodriguez and Greg Moore died in accidents. Author John Oreovicz perfectly captures the spirit of the age – and the lasting consequences of the events.



BLAUER X PIRELLI COLLECTION

blauerusa.com

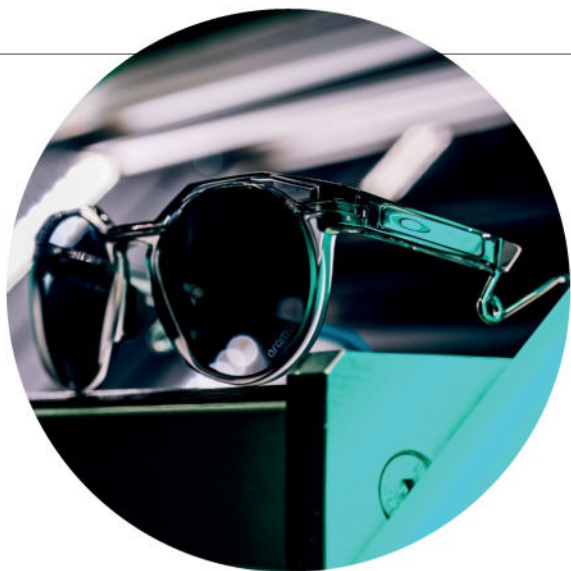
RRP From £405

It was during last year's Milan Menswear Fashion Week that US-Italian sportswear brand Blauer introduced its collaboration with Pirelli, and the first items of garb to spring from this arrangement are now on sale. The 'capsule' comprises four pieces of unisex outerwear built from technical materials including recycled PET and rubber, and the breathable fabric Taslan.

Sleeveless and long-sleeve puffers both feature recycled polyester with Taslan inserts and external polyurethane lamination to make them waterproof and windproof, and the Repeve padding is built into a seamless tubular structure. Waterproof zip closures, internal drawstring waists and Flash LED pockets for smartphones complete the functional ensemble.

The '2 in 1' parka combines a three-layer laminated windbreaker outer with a removable Repeve-padded inner. An adjustable hood

and multifunctional bellows pockets give flexibility. The 'Dust Coat' is a technical trenchcoat made from a three-layer, double-laminated recycled polyester fabric with rear ventilation. Laser-cut details add to the feel of modernity, while the double front closure, waterproof zip and buttons, adjustable cuffs, side pockets and concealed Flash LED pocket provide the requisite practicality when the weather turns hostile enough for the F1 cars to be circulating on Pirelli's blue-banded full wets...



ASTON MARTIN OAKLEY HSTN

shop.astonmartinf1.com

RRP £210.50

Oakley has been among Formula 1's eyewear brands of choice for many years now. Recently the company has begun to deviate from the wraparound look that characterised its offerings from *temps perdu*, and the original HSTN launched in 2022 embraced street and skate culture with a bold and distinctive style: not-quite-round lenses and non-linear arms.

The latest iteration maintains the high-bridge frame but takes the 'trigger' design on the arms a step further with a wire effect recalling those of the original and much-loved Eyeshade frames. Aston Martin and Oakley have had a technical partnership since 2021, but this is the first officially licensed merchandise to eventuate from the relationship: the frames combine a unique 'Grey Ink' effect with the F1 team's green colour and branding, and the 'Prizm' black lenses feature an etched Aramco logo.



DARIA SZOTEK



BLACK EYEWEAR

blackeyewear.com

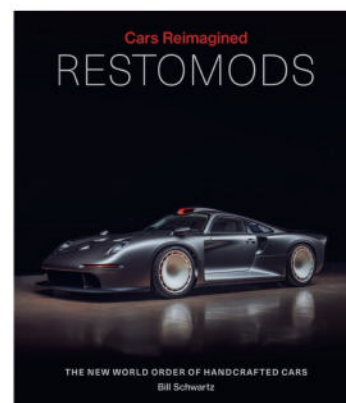
RRP From £197

Modern British boutique brand Black Eyewear generally takes its inspiration from the 1950s; founder Robert Roope, who counted celebrated filmmaker Stanley Kubrick among his clients, favoured solid black frames. But, for its latest collection, the company has dipped into the more extravagantly expressive 1970s and '80s. "Ideal for

large faces and larger-than-life personalities" is the hook for the sharply defined, square-fronted Zappa XL, a chunky frame design with a classic centre joint and oversize lenses. It looks equally flamboyant in the Amber Cloud colourway (above left) as it does in classic 'Two Ronnies' Matt Black; these are sunglasses for those who do not want to blend into the crowd.

Taking a slightly more subtle approach – unless

you choose the Berry colour option – the Legrand range wears its 1980s and '90s influences clearly. Bevelled contours and a straight brow line offset the shallower lens dimensions within large-squared frames. Described as "a bold yet balanced square design with a no-nonsense attitude and enduring elegance", it's available in a range of colours both solid and transparent, such as Clear Crystal (above right).



RESTOMODS: THE NEW WORLD ORDER OF HANDCRAFTED CARS

accartbooks.com

RRP £65

The first volume in the Cars Reimagined series from ACC Art Books tackles that somewhat controversial genre, the 'restomod' – a portmanteau term combining 'restoration' with 'modification'. We can hear the sharp intakes of breath coming from classic-car purists already.

The book, by Bill Schwartz, doesn't focus exclusively on the traditional definition of restomods – classics reanimated with modern technology and/or bigger engines – since the scene has now expanded with so-called 'continuation models' built either by the original manufacturer or those who have taken over the marques. Bentley, for instance, has produced a limited run of 12 Speed Sixes inspired by the antics of the legendary 'Bentley Boys'.

STAR CARS FOR SALE

We've gone for a nice mix this month, from grand prix circuit to rally stage



1989 ARROWS A11

Derek Warwick describes the Arrows A11 as one of the best three racing cars he drove in his long and illustrious career. The Ross Brawn-designed Formula 1 car for the 1989 season showed promise, but insufficient funds and unreliability hampered Arrows's season, an engine failure notably denying Warwick a possible victory at the wet Canadian Grand Prix. Chassis 04, which has its original 600+bhp 3.5-litre Cosworth DFR engine, was driven by Eddie Cheever in seven grands prix, with a best finish of fifth in Hungary helping Arrows to seventh in the constructors' table. The car has been fully restored and its engine overhauled by Nicholson McLaren.



MATTEO SEGATO



1998 SUBARU IMPREZA WRC98

Rally legend Colin McRae belied his spectacular style to win the gruelling Safari Rally three times. He didn't win it in 1998, but this Impreza would still be a fine addition to our fantasy garage. 'R7 WRC' was among the first batch of WRC98s, which featured upgraded powertrains over the title-winning WRC97s. It has an increased ride height, carbon fibre snorkel and other modifications for the Safari, which was its only WRC outing with the factory Prodrive team. Tyre and engine issues curtailed the efforts of McRae and Nicky Grist, before the car was sold and used by privateers. It was subsequently restored by Autosportif Engineering.

1981 ALFA ROMEO 179C

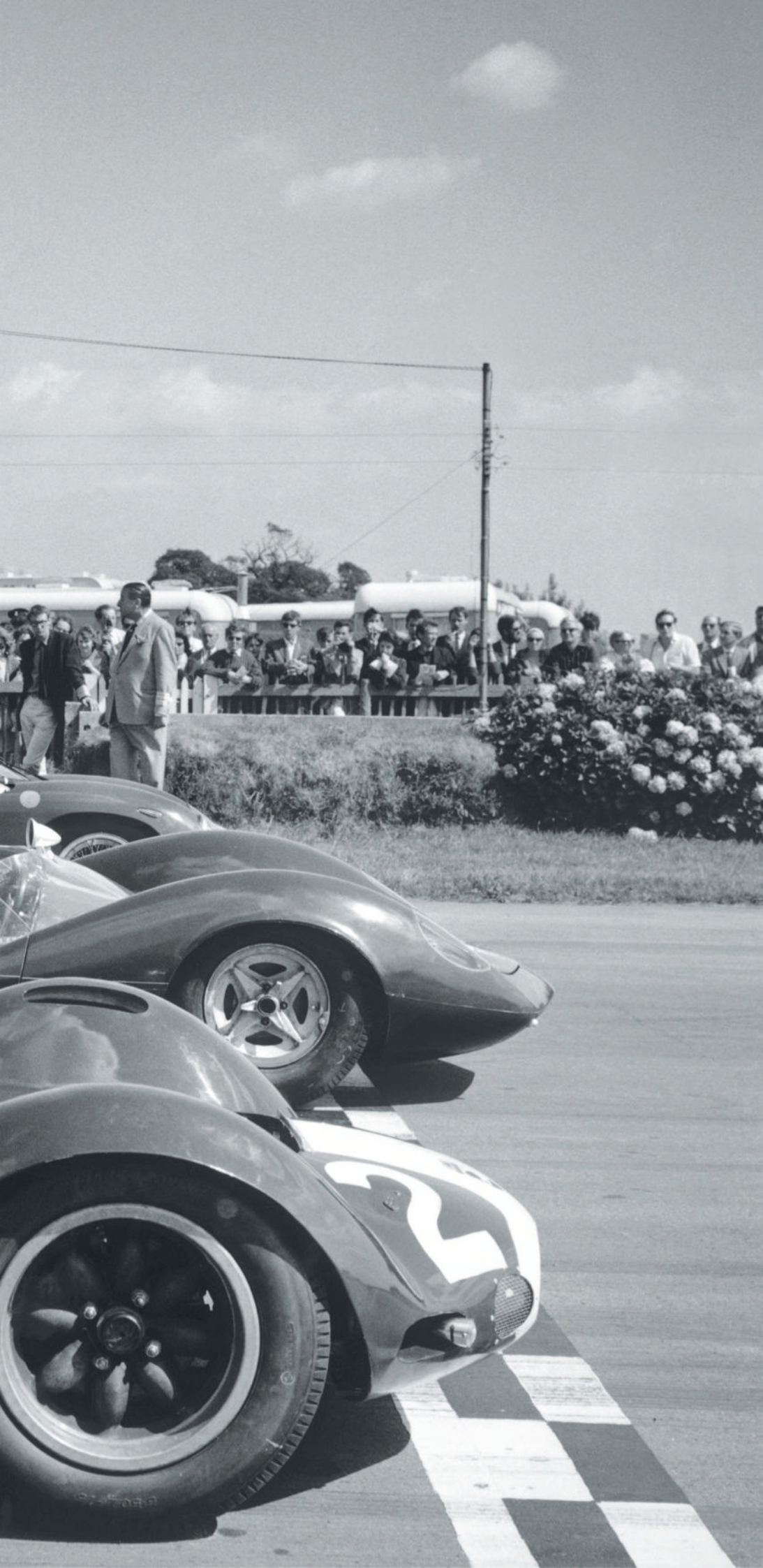
The Alfa Romeo 179, which first appeared at the end of 1979 and was developed extensively over the next couple of seasons, was not a particularly successful F1 design. But we rather like the idea of the V12-engined Alfa mixing it with the hordes of Cosworth DFVs on a historic F1 grid. The 179C arrived in 1981 but proved troublesome, particularly on high-speed circuits, the team reverting to 179Bs until the D spec was ready. Nevertheless, chassis 179C/03 is believed to have been raced by Bruno Giacomelli in four 1981 grands prix. It has been totally restored and its engine rebuilt.



1965 LOLA T70 MK1 SPYDER

Cars that have a victory at the Goodwood Revival on their CV are always sought after, and this T70 won September's Whitsun Trophy in the hands of Alex Brundle. Chassis SL70/3 appeared at the London Racing Car Show in January 1965 and was then sold to John Mecom in the United States, where it was raced by Walt Hansgen. The car was subsequently owned by Mac McClendon and then Marc Devis before becoming part of the ROFGO collection. It is eligible for Peter Auto and Masters events, and is currently in the livery it wore at the 1965 Sebring 12 Hours.





Countdown at Goodwood

The front-row trio of Bruce McLaren (Cooper-Oldsmobile T53), Jim Clark (Lotus-Ford 30) and Graham Hill (Ferrari 330P) await the start of the 1964 Tourist Trophy at Goodwood. Clark was first to react to the drop of the Union Jack, but McLaren, fastest in practice and favourite for the victory, was ahead before the first lap was completed. Both suffered mechanical woes – a slipping clutch for McLaren ended his afternoon, while a lengthy front-suspension repair and problems restarting in the pits meant a 12th-place finish for Clark. So it was Hill who took the honours after what Autosport described as “a magnificent and intelligently driven race”.

Photography LAT Photographic/
Getty Images

Where Goodwood, Sussex, UK
When Saturday 29 August 1964



McNish (second left) knew only a "perfect race" run at flat-out pace would do

DURAND/GAMMA-RAPHO/GETTY IMAGES

Audi snatches Le Mans victory against the odds

17 June 2008

Audi's domination of the Le Mans 24 Hours in the first decade or so of the century launched it to second on the all-time winners' list. And its finest victory came in what Autosport's long-term sportscar correspondent Gary Watkins believes is the greatest Le Mans of all time.

Audi arrived in France in 2008 very much up against it. Peugeot's 908 HDi FAP had beaten Audi's ageing R10 TDI in the three Le Mans Series rounds prior to Le Mans and qualifying continued the theme. Stephane Sarrazin led a Peugeot 1-2-3, his 3m18.513s lap 5.3 seconds faster than Audi's best by Allan McNish, though the Joest-run team did not prioritise pole.

Come the race, it quickly became clear that the fight for victory would be between the three 908s and the McNish/Tom Kristensen/Rinaldo Capello R10, running with a more 'pointy' set-up than its sisters that helped make it significantly quicker. The #2 Audi was the only car even remotely able to hang on to the Peugeots in the dry early stages, and clung on to the lead lap,

helped by better fuel consumption than the flying 908s.

Peugeot also had trouble, the car Sarrazin shared with Alex Wurz and Pedro Lamy dropping out of contention with a gear selector problem. The #9 car of Franck Montagny/Ricardo Zonta/Christian Klien also lost time early on, though was fast enough to regain the lead later. That was before Klien was nudged into a spin in traffic and got beached in the gravel, leaving McNish/Kristensen/Capello to battle the Peugeot of Nicolas Minassian, Marc Gene and 1997 Formula 1 world champion Jacques Villeneuve.

"The untroubled Peugeot could only edge away from the Audi," reported Watkins. And that meant the R10 was still in range when the rain that Audi expected but Peugeot did not arrived around half-distance...

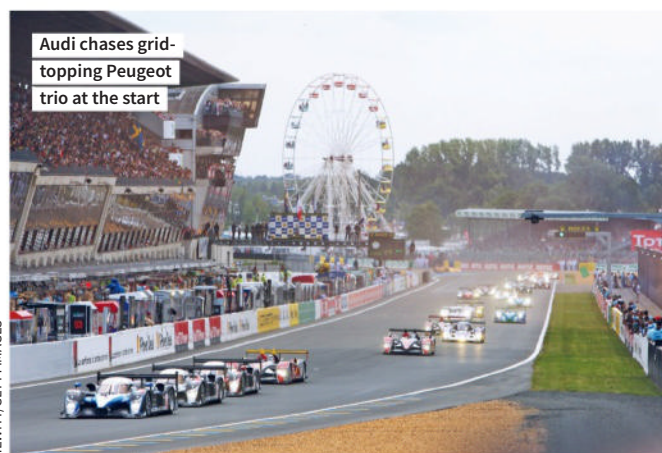
Not only was the Audi a more competitive proposition in the wet, but the Peugeots started suffering with overheating. "The dirt and the rubber from the track mixed with the rain to make a kind of paté that stuck to the radiators," explained Peugeot Sport team manager Serge Saulnier. "That gave us high oil and water temperatures, which meant we couldn't use full power."

The #7 Peugeot remained in contention, but the advantage had now swung to Audi. Despite a quick spin by Kristensen in the final hour, the Audi took the flag more than four minutes ahead. Peugeot took second and third, while the fourth-placed Audi was *seven laps* adrift of the winning R10.

McNish called it the "perfect race – anything less and we wouldn't have won. All three of us drove flat out to stay in touch. We knew the rain was coming and we knew we still had to be in touch when it arrived."

Le Mans 2008 wasn't just about the LMP1 battle, either. As well as the LMP2-winning Van Merksteijn Motorsport Porsche RS Spyder taking 10th overall, this was the era of Aston Martin vs Chevrolet in GT1. Jan Magnussen took pole with the Corvette C6.R he shared with Johnny O'Connell and Ron Fellows, but both Prodrive-run factory Aston Martin DBR9s took the fight to the pair of Pratt and Miller-run works Chevrolets. After a race-long, all-guns-blazing contest, the six-litre V12 Aston of Darren Turner, Antonio Garcia and David Brabham beat the seven-litre V8 Corvette of Magnussen/O'Connell/Fellows by less than a lap after a run about as perfect as that of the overall victor.

KEVIN TURNER



HEWITT/GETTY IMAGES



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London, EC1A 9PT.
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7429 4000.
Printed by Acorn Web Offset Ltd,
Loscoe Close, Normanton Industrial
Estate, Normanton WF6 1TW.
ISSN 0269-946X. Autosport is
published monthly by Motorsport
Network Media UK Ltd, 2 Stephen
Street, London W1T 1AN.

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Autosport, ISSN number 0269946X, is published monthly by Motorsport Network Media UK Ltd, 2 Stephen Street, London W1T 1AN, United Kingdom. Air freight and mailing in the USA by World Container Inc., 150-15, 183rd Street, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA. Periodicals postage paid at Brooklyn, NY 11256. Subscription records maintained at Motorsport Network Media UK Ltd,

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